

To Explore the Impact of Gender Perception on Sponsorship Decision Making.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree

of

Master Commerce in Marketing

by

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June 2019

Abstract:

This thesis discusses the prolific use of sponsorship as a marketing tool within the New Zealand sports industry, as well as the associated decision-making process and the influence of gender on sports sponsorship. This thesis predominantly looks at two sports, rugby and netball, and their respective regional teams (Crusaders and Tactix). Conducting research involving both sports allows for comparison and promotes a more in-depth analysis of findings.

Data was collected through conducting in-depth interviews with eight participants who had an affiliation with either sport code. Participants ranged from players, coaches, managers and those involved with sports marketing. They discussed their thoughts and opinions about successful sponsorships, what makes teams appealing to sponsors and the influence of gender throughout the in-depth interviews. They also completed an association exercise to attain subconscious thoughts and feelings towards sports sponsorship, that they may not have been willing to express verbally.

The results of these findings support, and are consistent with, previous literature surrounding sports sponsorship; the associated benefits and decision-making process. Results concur with Lough & Irwin (2001) in regard to the benefits associated with successful sponsorships. Whilst sponsorship is a thoroughly researched area of literature, much like gender, there is currently minimal literature surrounding the influence that gender has on a sponsor's decision-making process. Thus, this thesis addresses this area of research and presents a new finding for literature.

Managerially, findings can provide teams or athletes looking for sponsorship opportunities in New Zealand, with an understanding of what sponsors value and consider significant factors. From a sponsor's perspective, these findings discuss the benefits of using sponsorship as a marketing tool and show the benefits of sponsoring women's sports. This research suggests that sponsors should become more aware of the lack of opportunities women's teams and athletes have faced, in an attempt to reduce the gender bias within the New Zealand sports industry.

Acknowledgements:

Firstly, I would like to thank my parents for supporting me throughout not only my University education but also through the completion of this thesis. They have provided me with constant encouragement, support and reassurance through the entirety of this thesis and for that I will be eternally grateful. They have made me who I am, and without them this thesis would simply not have been possible.

Secondly, I would like to thank both sets of grandparents. Unfortunately, they are not with me to celebrate this achievement, however I know that they would have been incredibly proud. Much like my parents, completing this thesis would not have been possible without them.

I would also like to give a big thanks to my extended family for everything you have done for me over the course of my thesis. Also, to my friends who have supported me along the way. Your kind words of support and encouragement have been a huge help in enabling me to complete this and is greatly appreciated.

I would like to say a big thank you to my primary supervisor Dr Chris Chen for allowing me to complete this research. Thank you for your knowledge, expertise and commitment along the way. I very much appreciated your recommendations and ideas and wish you all the best for the future.

To Dr Ann-Marie Kennedy and Lucie Ozanne, a big thank you to you both as well. Your encouragement to think outside the box and your availability was greatly appreciated. Your patience and guidance throughout the completion of this thesis was a blessing.

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Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 Background

Sports sponsorship is an internationally recognised and utilised marketing tool that is rapidly increasing in popularity. Much like normal sponsorships, a brand or organisation sponsors a sports team or athlete to assist with their sporting endeavours. Examples of sports sponsorship in New Zealand include the All Blacks rugby team being sponsored by Adidas, and the New Zealand Silver Ferns netball team being sponsored by ANZ. Sports sponsorships differ hugely and are dependent on a whole host of factors, including length of sponsorship, monetary investment and who gets sponsored.

Sponsorship is recognised as an effective marketing tool; a wide range of benefits that are associated with this form of marketing are discussed throughout this thesis. Brand awareness is a commonly used term, referring to how much publicity and recognition a brand generates. Through identifying and, subsequently, widening their target market, a brand establishes their presence and creates awareness within their targeted consumers. This is a factor that proves vital to a brand or organisations success and longevity within the market.

Over \$100 billion was spent on sports sponsorship globally in 2018, which shows how far reaching and diverse sponsorship is as a marketing tool (Statista, 2019). The New Zealand sports industry is also rapidly progressing, with the All Blacks having two of the most valuable rugby sponsorships in the world (McNicol, 2013); these two sponsors generating over \$3.2 billion of revenue annually. Whilst this is a very high paying sponsorship agreement, not all sponsorships are of this value. An example of this is the female national rugby team that received their first sponsorship in 2018, having received no funding prior to this. This highlights the gender bias that is present within the New Zealand sports industry.

Brand loyalty is often discussed and is another factor that sponsors attempt to create with their target market through the use of sponsorship. Establishing a stable connection and relationship with their target market helps to retain them as consumers. Having loyal consumers helps to maintain the sponsor's position in the market and remain competitive (Lough & Irwin, 2001).

Perceived fit is also an important factor to ensure successful sponsorships and is something that can often be overlooked. Having an appropriate match between the sponsor and sponsee is crucial. Ensuring that morals, beliefs and overall goals align between the two parties helps present a sound and appropriate match. Thus, consumers would deem the sponsorship and fit to be appropriate and support the relationship.

Brand image is another benefit identified through sponsorship and a term used to describe how consumers perceive the brand. This is often influenced by the perceived fit of the sponsorship agreement. Should the fit not be deemed acceptable by consumers, it negatively affects the image of the brand, and vice versa. Investing in sponsorship enhances the brand's image and generates customer value (Fahy, Farrelly & Quester, 2002). This is due to the fact the brand is seen to be investing in society, rather than the brand itself. This idea is discussed further in the literature review.

Gender bias in sports is a topic that has been researched in depth. There are many examples of such biases discussed throughout this research. However, the influence of gender on the sponsorship decision-making process has been left relatively untouched. Thus, questions surrounding the factors that influence a sponsor's decision-making process arose. This thesis attempts to fill this gap in literature by answering the relevant research questions and attempts to understand the influence of gender on sports sponsorship in New Zealand.

1.2 Problem Orientation

As previously discussed in section 1.1, sponsorships are argued to be one of the most cost-effective ways for companies to influence and target their chosen target market (Gardner & Shuman, 1987; Greenhalgh & Greenwell 2013). It is quickly becoming one of the fastest growing areas of marketing (McDaniel & Kinney, 1998). As discussed in the literature review, sponsorships are an effective way to target the brand's consumers and stimulates a host of benefits for brands. Through previous literature and current examples, it is evident that men's sports teams and athletes appear to be more favoured in sponsorship opportunities than their female counterparts.

As gender in sport is a widely researched and discussed area in literature, with many benefits being identified through the involvement of activity and participation in teams, research into

the decision-making process of sponsors and the influence of gender appeared untouched and necessary. There are countless examples of female athletes and teams performing at the same level as men's teams but not receiving any fundings from sponsors. Thus, the following question arose: if women's sports teams and athletes are equally successful on a performance and competition level as males, why are they lacking sponsorship opportunities?

This thesis looks to uncover the influence of gender on the sponsor's decision-making process. Currently there is minimal research on this topic, so this research will attempt to uncover and discuss this idea, should it exist. In conjunction with the factors of successful sponsorships and the decision-making process, the influence of gender will be a valuable addition to literature should there be relevant findings.

1.3 Research Objectives

Through researching sports sponsorship in New Zealand, it has become clear that the influence of gender on the sponsor's decision-making process has been relatively untouched in literature. Thus, this thesis intends to address this issue and produce a piece of research that attempts to uncover the affect gender has and whether or not the lack of opportunities that female teams and athletes are facing due to gender bias. The nature of this research is exploratory as it seeks to uncover information surrounding sports sponsorship. The research objectives are as follows:

1. What are the factors to a successful sponsorship?
2. What are the factors that influence the sponsorship decision-making process?
3. How does gender influence sponsorship selection in sport?

Through the use of the methodology discussed in Chapter Three, this thesis gathers data through conducting in-depth interviews with eight participants. Thoughts, opinions and beliefs surrounding sports sponsorship, factors to successful sponsorships and the influence of gender, will be obtained from these interviews. The analysis of data will provide the required information to generate a sound understanding and explanation of the research questions listed above.

1.4 Contributions of this Study

The completion of this thesis contributes to literature through the provision of insight regarding the influence of gender on sports sponsorship within the New Zealand sports industry. Whilst a substantial amount of the findings agree with previous literature surrounding the benefits of sponsorship, the influence of gender was the major contribution of this study.

This research provides empirical evidence from the New Zealand sports industry, to better understand the decision-making process of sponsors. New Zealand teams and athletes now have a better understanding into what sponsors find appealing and what they value when seeking teams or athletes to sponsor. As a result, sponsees can be better prepared for the selection process, heightening their chances of sponsorship selection. From the findings, it is evident that gender does have an influence on the decision-making process of sponsors. Thus, brands looking to sponsor athletes or teams should be more accepting and be open to opportunities irrespective of gender, rather than having a fixed and narrow mindset on who to sponsor. Whilst this study only focused on two sports (rugby and netball), the findings can be applied to all sports in New Zealand context.

1.5 Thesis Overview

The structure of this thesis is as follows:

Chapter Two consists of a review of the pertinent literature surrounding sports sponsorship and gender. It is intended to provide the background to sports sponsorship, that subsequently explains decisions made through the remainder of this thesis. This literature review discusses a range of benefits of sponsorship examples including brand awareness, sponsorship decision making, brand image, perceived fit and gender bias. The literature included in Chapter Two provides the foundation for this research and shows the gap in the literature surrounding the influence of gender on the decision-making process in the sports industry.

In Chapter Three, the methodology is discussed. Within this section, authors such as Chua (1986) and Crotty (1998) are referenced. It is here that the theoretical perspective and epistemology are explained in depth. The use of hermeneutics, which also linked to the epistemology and used in this research, are explained in this chapter. As this research was of

a qualitative nature, justification as to why in-depth interviews were the most appropriate method for gathering data is given. How participants were contacted, the development of interview questions and the interview format is also detailed in this section of the thesis. All in-depth interviews were transcribed into Microsoft Word documents precisely by the interviewer. Explanations surrounding the hand-coding of notes and data analysis are also discussed.

Chapter Four details the findings of this research. It begins with a brief summary of successful sponsorships, as well as the themes identified from the in-depth interviews. It goes on to then explain the participant's explanations and viewpoints, as well as how the accumulation of these result in the findings. Themes are reported and justified through quotes from respondents given during the in-depth interviews, as well as from the association exercise.

Chapter Five discusses the findings of Chapter Four in depth. These findings are linked back to the literature review section of this thesis. Within the discussions, the research and findings are linked to the research questions to answer the proposed questions. The importance of the findings is then explained, with academic contributions and managerial implications identified and discussed. Finally, limitations are outlined and directions for future research suggested before an overall conclusion of this thesis is made.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

2.1 Sponsorship

Sponsorships can be defined as investments in causes or events to support corporate, social or marketing objectives (Gardner & Shuman, 1987). Those marketing objectives include increasing market share, creating brand and product associations, stimulating brand awareness and strategically positioning the brand in the market (Lough & Irwin, 2001). Corporate sponsorship of sports and sporting events is becoming one of the fastest growing areas of marketing and an important component of the promotional mix (McDaniel & Kinney, 1998). Commercial sponsorships have particularly gained traction within the last three decades (Meenaghan, 1998). Sponsorships are argued to be one of the most cost effective ways, if not the most cost effective way, for marketers to establish and influence positive perceptions of their companies, services and products offered to their target market (Gardner & Shuman, 1987; Greenhalgh & Greenwell 2013). Sponsorships can vary in multiple ways: length of contract, form of support, size and scope of the target audience, level of financial commitment and number of sponsors involved (McDaniel, 1999).

Sponsorship incorporates the distribution of resources to support another entity (e.g. individual, event or organisation), with the aim of fulfilling objectives specific to that organisation. It is referred to as a strategic advertising tool to impact positively on a consumer's purchase decision-making process (Crompton, 1996). In the sporting realm, to ensure the impact of sponsorship is of a positive nature, the perceived fit between the athlete(s) and the organisation/sponsor must be deemed appropriate as the sponsorship, much like any advertising tool, affects the image of the sponsor (McDonald, 1991). An image fits when the characteristics of an athlete or team have positive associations by a consumer that correspond to the image of the sponsor. While an appropriate fit may enhance the image of the sponsor, a poor fit could dilute the perceived image of the brand (Shaw & Amis, 2001).

2.2 History of Sponsorship

Sponsorships have evolved rapidly as a marketing tool for brands and companies on a global scale. However, in more recent times, sponsorships have evolved from a philanthropic orientation to a more market-driven one (Cornwell, 1995). Lough & Irwin (2001) concur with Cornwell (1995), stating in their research that “results orientated marketing motives appear to

have replaced the philanthropic/image-building philosophy of the past.” Sponsorship as a marketing technique dates back to the early 1950s whereby President D. Eisenhower was the first president to sponsor a physical fitness program. From this point on, sponsorships were seen as an effective method to create enthusiasm and involve the relevant community in events (Cornwell, 1995). Cornwell (1995) also recognises that sponsorships have evolved from a promotional technique to one that is now inclusive of multiple sponsorship-linked activities. More recently, sponsorships have become a part of the marketing mix. This is due to the persistent focus on mass communication and the reoccurring comparison of sponsorship to other varying advertising techniques. Cornwell (1995) discusses the similarity of sponsorship objectives with those of general marketing objectives, suggesting that the underlying objectives are in fact almost the same.

According to Greenhalgh and Greenwell’s (2013) work, sport sponsorship objectives are communication, public relations and promotional intentions that can be achieved through sport sponsorships. Essentially, the relationship formed through the sponsoring of athletes or teams is used as a determinant for achieving other, sometimes unrelated, company goals (Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2013). Sports sponsorship is a particularly important marketing tool, as shown but the amount of expenditure invested in such advertising techniques. It was estimated that approximately \$592 billion was spent on advertising related expenses in 2014; approximately \$55.3 billion of that was estimated to be spent on sport sponsorship worldwide in that year. This suggests that this type of promotion is dominating the sport marketing world (Shank & Lyberger, 2015).

The reasons for implementing sponsorship as a marketing strategy differs depending on the company. However, common benefits experienced by brands when using this method of advertising include brand awareness, brand exposure, brand cohesiveness, brand recognition, product sales and brand loyalty (Lough & Irwin, 2001). Entering into a sponsorship agreement can also stimulate connections and associations with local businesses and communities. A sponsorship allows for the entertaining of corporate consumers and improvement of employee morale, as well as creating an opportunity to test potential products under real life conditions.

Table 2.1 below summarises relevant sponsorship literature. Each of the differing sponsorship elements, will be discussed in depth following the table.

Table 2.1 *Summary of Sports Sponsorship*

	Consumer Involvement and Target Market	Market Share	Return on Investment	Brand Equity	Brand Image	Brand Awareness	Brand Loyalty and Goodwill
What's in It for Me? An Investigation of North American Professional Niche Sport Sponsorship Objectives (Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2013).	Enhances corporate image and encourages consumer involvement		Increases sales and is a vital source of capital		Enhances the brand's image	Increases brand awareness	Stimulates brand loyalty and dissonance
A Comparative Analysis of Sponsorship Objectives for U.S. Women's Sport and Traditional Sport Sponsorship (Lough & Irwin, 2001).	Image and brand enhancement with consumers in the market	Increases size of target audience/market share	Increases revenue, sales and greater return on investment	Increases brand and product associations	Strategically enhance the brands position in the market	Increases brand awareness	
Sport sponsorship decision making in a global market (Lee & Ross, 2012).	Increases target market reach			Increases product associations and links	Enhances the brand's image	Increases brand awareness	
Sponsorship: An Important Component of the Promotions Mix (Gardner & Shuman, 1987)	Increases target market reach and consumers in exclusive markets		Increases sales and consumer purchase intentions				Provides access to key constituencies such as employees, stakeholders and public policy makers.
An International Review of Sponsorship Research (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998).	Tool to support local communities and establish relationships	Helps access direct and indirect target audiences	Provision of assistance for financial objectives and improves profitability		Enhances the corporate's image and marketing objectives	Increases brand awareness	Improves goodwill
Determinants of Sport Sponsorship Response (Speed & Thompson, 2000).	Stimulated brand associations for consumers					Increases brand awareness and exposure	Enhances perceived status of the event

Competitive advantage through sponsorship (Fahy, Farrelly & Quester, 2002).	Has the potential to transcend cultural boundaries			Gains competitive advantage over other similar brands	Enhances the brand's image and generates customer value		Provides opportunities for brand exclusivity
Sponsorship: perspectives on its strategic role (Dolphin, 2003).	Adds value to organisational communication	Build equity and gain affinity with target audiences	More cost effective than other methods of advertising	Provides the capability for competitive advantage	Enhances the brand and corporate image	Promoted brand awareness	Improves goodwill
The Impact of Brand Cohesiveness and Sport Identification on Brand Fit in a Sponsorship Context (Gwinner & Bennett, 2008).	Targets consumers based on lifestyles and interests	Helps to establish a competitive presence globally	Boosts sales	Stimulates brand cohesiveness which leads to increased perceived fit		Increases brand awareness	Facilitates brand image and attitudes among consumers
Achieving Marketing Objectives Through Social Sponsorships (Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006).	Improves CSR and perfection of brand as they present as being socially responsible			Can increase brand equity	Creates a more favourable image of the firm/brand		
The Implications of Recency and Gender Effects in Consumer Response to Ambush Marketing (McDaniel & Kinney, 1998).	Directly impacts consumer orientated objectives		Increases customer purchase intentions		Improves brand image	Increases brand awareness	Draws attention to the brand/event relationship
Creative Strategies in Social Media Marketing: An Exploratory Study of Branded Social Content and Consumer Engagement (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).	Provides additional touch points for the consumer between the consumer and brand	High consumer reach		Helps to bridge the gap between the brand and consumers			Helps build social capital
Leveraging sponsorship with corporate social	Improves CSR					Increases brand awareness	Stimulates positive associations for

responsibility (Uhrich, Koenigstorfer & Groeppel- Klein, 2013).							consumers with the event
Sponsorship effects on brand image: The role of exposure and activity involvement (Grohs & Reisinger, 2014).	Increases exposure and involvement		Providing links to specific brand benefits	Reduces perception of commercialisation	Strengthens brand image		Successful in changing or strengthening consumer's perceptions of the brand
The Vigor of a Disregarded Ally in Sponsorship: Brand Image Transfer Effects Arising from a Cosponsor (Gross & Wiedmann, 2015).	A higher level of credibility and develops a brands strategy		Creates key brand personality traits	Helps to "brand build"	Improves brand image and associations	Increases brand awareness	Enhances thoughts, beliefs and feelings a consumer may have for a brand
A Comparative Analysis of Sponsorship Objectives for U.S. Women's Sport and Traditional Sport Sponsorship (Lough & Irwin, 2001).	Strategically enhances a company's position in the market		Return on investment and product sales	Promotes/stimulates brand recognition	Increases brand image	Increases brand awareness and exposure	
What's in It for Me? An Investigation of North American Professional Niche Sport Sponsorship Objectives (Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2013).	Enhances company's image and community involvement	Builds market share	Increases sales			Women's sport places a greater emphasis on awareness and brand image.	
Sport sponsorship decision making in a global market (Lee & Ross, 2012).	Can overcome cultural and language obstacles in a global market			Generates positive attitudes toward a sponsor's product and brand.		Increases brand awareness	Achieves better global marketing strategies

2.3 Target Market

Sponsorship has two primary benefits: positioning and image enhancement (Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2013). Lee and Ross (2012) concur with the previous researchers' idea that sponsorship has significant implications as to how the brand is perceived. They go on to say that the image of a sponsored event, and whether or not it relates to their target market, needs to be taken into careful consideration. As a company's relationship with its target audience and consumers may be distant and on a business/professional basis, sponsorship can provide an advantage. Sponsorship enables the brand's target market to be reached through activities where the consumer has a personal interest or connection (Crompton, 1996).

Recent sponsorships appear to be becoming more and more successful at influencing a consumers' perceptions of brands. This is accredited to the sponsor's existing credibility, perceived goodwill and timely avoidance of conspicuous advertising objectives (Grohs & Reisinger, 2014). As seen in the table above, Grohs & Reisinger (2014) have identified that through the use of sports sponsorship, changing or strengthening a consumer's perception of the brand can be achieved.

Social marketing is simply promoting a brand with no concern for profits or revenue and is often it is implemented to benefit society. This marketing technique helps to stimulate positive brand associations for the consumer towards either the event or product (Uhrich, Koenigstorfer & Groeppel-Klein, 2013). Marketers can support social marketing efforts through sponsorship. An example of this is the SBS Christchurch marathon. Sponsors of the event allow for both males and females to compete against each other, rather than having a separate event for each gender. The social marketing goal of the event is to promote a healthy lifestyle, fitness and encourage New Zealanders to get active together. In comparison, commercial marketing sees sponsors/brands purely driven by revenue, status and the potential implications on their reputation.

Uhrich, Koenigstorfer & Groeppel-Klein (2014) identified the effect of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in regard to sponsorships. Sponsorship is a technique used by brands to encourage consumers to view them as being socially responsible (Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006). By being seen to help and support the community, brands may establish brand equity and loyalty. It was found that CSR-related sponsorship adds social meaning to the relationship and thus strengthens brand credibility. Incorporating CSR aspects to a

sponsorship will significantly increase the perceived level of congruence a consumer has with the sponsor and sponsored party (Uhrich, Koenigstorfer & Groeppel-Klein, 2014).

2.4 Market Share

Increased communication between the sponsor and sponsee enables the sponsor to appropriately align with the sponsee whilst stabilising the relationship (Gardner & Shuman, 1987). It builds clarity and sets boundaries for what consumers can expect from the brand. Those brands that remain consistent with communication, promotional and marketing strategies have a greater likelihood of perceived positive sponsorship fit. A communication channel that has drastically increased in use and popularity over recent times is that of social media. Due to its wide-reaching nature and almost instant availability, it is seen as a useful tool for sponsors to quickly and effectively connect with their target audience.

Social media channels, such as the internet, are highly used amongst sport sponsorships to develop and reinforce consistent and relevant communication between the sponsor, sponsee and target audience (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Social media is an example of a highly-utilised communication channel. It allows individuals to express feelings and thoughts through media channels without boundaries. Social media also enables sponsors to connect with their target audience; not just through a dialog relationship but a triologue. This enables the connection and engagement of three external parties: the sponsor, target audience and sponsee (Dimitriadis, 2014).

Due to the wide-reaching nature of social media marketing and ease of viewing, it provides additional touch points which encourage the continuation of interaction and involvement between the consumer and the brand. Ashely and Tuten (2015) found that having a consumer psychologically engaged proves to be crucial when promoting a sponsorship, as it allows for consumers to be participants rather than be passive recipients. Branded social media campaigns, such as sponsorships, provide the target audience with additional touch points to the brand and encourage ongoing interaction between the two actors. The more creative the strategy, the more effective “bridging the gap” is between the consumers and brand; social media channels are a creative and popular way for brands to do this. Using social media presents the brand as using a variety of message strategies; however, still allowing them to speak to their consumers with one integrated and consistent message (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

2.5 Brand Equity

As attitude towards sponsors and sponsorships are often heavily scrutinised, establishing brand equity is paramount for success. In some cases, this can be a challenge as some consumers are of the opinion that sports activities (more so than other industries) are highly commercialised events, with sponsors and brands deriving large financial benefits from their funding (Lough & Irwin, 2001). Some consumers are of the impression that advertising overall has no benefit to society, is too commercialised and creates a degree of exploitation (Meenaghan, 2001). It can be seen as forceful and selfish, leading to default defence mechanisms from consumers and disengagement (Meenaghan, 2001). However, despite some scrutiny that sports sponsors may attract, sponsorship in general is less obviously commercially driven, with seemingly more positive intentions from the brand/sponsor.

Ashley & Tuten (2015) identified in their research that sponsorship helps to build social capital. Social capital is of a similar nature to brand equity in that consumers feel comfortable and have positive associations to the sponsor (Uhrich, Koenigstorfer & Groeppel-Klein, 2013). As sponsorships involve a lower level of cognitive engagement and are more image dominant, consumers can often be more accepting of sponsorship attempts than other forms of advertising (Kelly, Coote, Cornwell & McAlister, 2017). Ensuring that the chosen target market feels involved in the relationship rather than a target is crucial, emphasising the need for psychological engagement to reduce the likelihood of the previously mentioned perspectives from developing.

Simmons & Becker-Olsen (2006) identified in their research that sports sponsorship can establish brand equity. Ensuring the target market feels involved and included in the sponsorship enables the development of this attribute. Roy & Cornwell (2004) identified in their research that a sponsor's brand equity has a significant influence on its consumer's responses to their chosen sponsorship activities. This suggests that if the consumer supports the relationship, they will have more positive feelings and associations towards the brand. Knowing whether or not a sponsorship is a worthwhile investment to strengthen brand equity is crucial for sponsors to acknowledge prior to engaging in the agreement (Kelly, Coote, Cornwell & McAlister, 2017). Thus, Roy & Cornwell (2004) throughout their findings, reiterate the fact that building brand equity is imperative to success and sponsorship is a useful tool to achieve that.

2.6 Brand Image

Ambush marketing is a widely discussed topic within sponsorship. When investing in sponsorship, a brand or organisation is striving to achieve the commercial objectives set by the company. Examples include brand awareness, image creation and increased revenue (Meenaghan, 1998). Meenaghan (1998) goes on to say that sponsorship is a highly flexible method of marketing, enabling access to a wide range of stakeholders. A distinguishing factor between ambush marketing and conventional marketing is that both the message and medium are directly linked to the sponsorship (Meenaghan, 1998). Ambush marketing is thought to be a successful marketing strategy employed by sponsors wanting to heighten their involvement with relevant consumers. Meenaghan (1998) found that consumers are more likely to identify with sponsors that their team/athlete supports than those in the more abstract form. From previous research, it can be concluded that through ambush marketing the sponsor can have influence over their consumer's emotions, should they be sponsoring the appropriate team for their target market.

Positioning and brand image development and are two key strengths of integrating sponsorship into an organisation's marketing mix. An organisation's image enables consumers to differentiate between products that may appear similar. Sponsorships also enable an organisation to develop a connection on a more intimate and emotional level with their target audience. Often the relationship a brand has with their target market is predominantly commercial; however, sponsorship enables the brand's audience to be included with activities that they have a personal interest and connection with (Crampton, 1996).

2.7 Brand Awareness

Sponsorship is a technique implemented by brands with the intention of impacting consumer orientated objectives such as brand awareness and exposure. According to Gwinner and Bennett (2008), brand cohesiveness is linked to brand knowledge. As brand knowledge is a reflection of the associations and perceptions one retains about a brand, awareness and loyalty are often follow-on effects from initial exposure. Brand awareness is a reoccurring theme for both sponsors and sponsees when entering into a sponsorship agreement. Promoting and developing one's brand through exposure in turn increases the potential size of the target market. The development of awareness and brand recognition are primary examples of sponsorship objectives for companies (Lough & Irwin, 2001). These authors also

identified that large sponsors focus more on increasing overall brand awareness whilst smaller sponsors focus more on increasing brand awareness in their chosen target market (Lough & Irwin, 2001).

However, McDaniel & Kinney (1998) are of the opinion that awareness of sponsorships is unfortunately fleeting, simply due to ambush marketing. They suggest that in an attempt to compensate for this lack of awareness, sponsors need to secure product or category exclusivity during the event as well as afterwards.

2.8 Brand Loyalty and Goodwill

As identified by Gardner & Shuman (1987), brand loyalty provides access to relevant stakeholders, the public and their chosen target market. Brand loyalty and goodwill is something that consumers often develop over time, through feelings of trust and respect towards the sponsor and sponsee. From the literature review, it is evident that sponsorship draws attention to the brand and the relationship with sponsees (McDaniel & Kinney, 1998). Once consumers are familiar with the brand and relationship, securing that brand loyalty enables the brand to build their social capital; something that is crucial to the success, progress and exclusivity of a brand (Fahy, Farrelly & Quester, 2002).

Something that can influence consumers when establishing brand loyalty is the perceived fit of the sponsorship. Ensuring that the perceived fit between a sponsor and sponsored entity is deemed acceptable by consumers is paramount to a successful sponsorship (Woisetschlager, Eiting, Haselhoff & Michaelis, 2009). High fit sponsorships are aligned and consistent with a brand's image, position and business promises. Gwinner & Bennett, (2008) identified that perceived fit leads to brand cohesiveness, thus facilitating positive attitudes amongst consumers towards the brand. Low fit sponsorships are often not aligned with the organisation's profitability, and the sponsor-sponsee relationship is unstable and inadequately matched (Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006). A brand's main challenge when faced with differentiation amongst marketing techniques is determining whether a sponsorship effect is sufficient enough to shift consumers from their present stage into the adoption stage. Creating awareness and brand exposure comes naturally with sponsorship; however, converting brand loyal consumers or encouraging product adoption proves to be much more of a challenge. Likewise, if consumers have predetermined beliefs, views or perceptions about a brand, it is difficult to convince them otherwise.

Sponsorship fit between the brand and the sponsored athlete is paramount to ensure a successful relationship between the brand, sponsored actor(s) and consumers. Sponsor fit can influence consumers either positively or negatively depending on the perceived match of the sponsor and sponsee. When the relationship between the two actors is deemed to be positive, then sport identification, brand cohesiveness and awareness are increased (Gwinner & Bennett, 2008).

2.9 Sponsorship Decision Making

The sponsorship decision making process can be difficult to understand and conceptualise, as the structure and process varies considerably. Lee & Ross (2012) identified in their research that understanding the factors that influence the decision-making process helps to achieve the objectives. Some of these factors include media coverage, budget, reach/geographical coverage, image and a link from the sponsor's product(s) to the event itself.

Sports marketing can also be understood as the implementation of marketing processes to sports products as well as non-sport related products through the association of sport (Shank & Lyberger, 2015). The significant increase in the popularity of sport sponsorship as a means of advertising for brands has been paralleled by the shift in focus from celebrities to iconic and successful sporting figures (Shank & Lyberger, 2015). Athletes selected for sponsorships often earn more from their sponsorship agreements than their direct earnings from their chosen sport (Shaw & Amis, 2001). Ashley and Tuten (2015) found that when making sponsorship-related decisions, sponsors often choose to advertise in similar ways to the mainstream brands with whom they are competing for opportunities. They also identified that when making sponsorship decisions, sponsors gravitate towards the use of social media as a factor for suitability due to their ability to repurpose existing brand assets and wide reach. As a consumer's level of psychological engagement often determines the success of a sponsorship, sponsors need to ensure their target market are participants rather than simply recipients of information (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

2.10 Sponsorship Fit

Identifying and targeting an appropriate target market is essential for a brand's sponsorship success. Matching their consumers with an appropriate sponsee can be challenging as values, core beliefs and image must align. Factors such as lifestyle, consumption patterns, attitudes towards sport, and involvement with sport and media are examples of influencing factors within sport marketing (McDaniel & Kinney, 1998). Whether or not the perceived fit between a sponsor and sponsee (either an individual athlete such as Daniel Carter or alternatively a team such as the All Blacks) is appropriate is determined by the consumer. Prominent product endorsers, such as Daniel Carter for Jockey Underwear, have proven to be more effective than lesser known representatives.

Whilst pre-existing notoriety is a valuable advantage, the physical attractiveness of a sponsee has also been identified by Kahke and Homer (1985) as a factor for sponsors to consider when selecting the ideal candidate(s). The same researchers identified that upon an initial glance, attractiveness is a feature that was found to be more quickly acknowledged by consumers compared to other attributes; this being attributable to the visual aspect. However, whilst the attractiveness of a sponsee is an eye-catching feature, consumers relate more to understated and 'normal' looking athletes. The down to earth impression that less publicised athletes provide connects more with consumers as it presents a sense of modesty (Kahke and Homer, 1985). Therefore, when sponsors partake in the selection of a candidate, ensuring that the sponsee appears relatable and humble may improve the perceived fit of the relationship.

A greater perceived fit often leads to a positive event image, thus stimulating the likelihood of consumer purchases and future brand loyalty (Grohs & Reisinger, 2014). However, the longer a consumer is exposed to a sponsored event, the greater the likelihood of a consumer creating negative associations to the event, as it can result in perceived event commercialisation. Also, the brand may be forced to deal with problematic partners or attempt to attain value from already achieved objectives. As a result, sponsors must carefully select the level of exposure and optimal length of the sponsorship contract in order to prevent negative associations. When deciding on a sponsorship relationship, involving the consumer in establishing the most appropriate athlete(s) to sponsor is a successful strategy to implement. Involvement increases a consumer's recall of the brand and reinforces the message and or products the sponsor is attempting to promote.

As previously discussed, fit is a significant determinant in the success of a sponsorship; this factor can also be referred to as congruence. Congruence looks at how the varying actors are related, compatible and harmonious. The perceived level of congruence between the sponsor, sponsee and event is crucial in generating desirable responses from the target market (Roy & Cornwell, 2004). The congruence of a sponsor's alliance affects how easily associations can become linked to the sponsor, sponsee and event. Congruence also has an effect on how easily an existing relationship can be recalled (Keller, 1993), as well as having the ability to manipulate predetermined opinions about a brand or sponsor.

Consumers ultimately determine the outcome as a high level of congruence leads to sponsorship identification, brand equity and a stronger image transfer; a low level of congruence leads to cognitive dissonance, disengagement and displeasure towards the sponsor. As sponsorship can be viewed as simply a method to generate sales and recognition for a brand, greater perceived congruence results in greater positive associations the consumer has to the brand and marketing strategy. Corporate social activities exhibited by the brand help to leverage the brand's message and perceived intentions to consumers. These responsibilities also enable consumers to resolve any potential inconsistencies that arise through moderate to low event and brand congruity. Thus, linkage between congruity and sponsorship is crucial when investing in a sponsorship (Uhrich, Koenigstorfer & Groeppel-Klein, 2013).

Although sponsorships are often perceived to be an effective and efficient marketing technique to reach target audiences, they are significantly more effective when the brand has created positive associations in the minds of their consumers. Robinson and Trail (2005) argued that sports teams become symbolic of communities and promote a sense of belonging for individuals within their community. It is through this sense of belonging that positive associations and connections begin to foster between entities. These positive associations are stemmed through congruence, perceived fit and level of exposure. As a result, determining the match between the respective actors is a crucial decision for the sponsors and can ultimately impact on the validity and success of the relationship. A relationship that is easily recognisable and previously established provides the sponsor with security and presents as a less risky option. Brands are more inclined to mimic or replicate other likeminded brand's

successful marketing strategies. They make adjustments accordingly and provide justification upon completion of the sponsorship, rather than venturing into an untouched realm of sponsorship risking their credibility, brand name and reputation (Shaw and Amis, 2001).

In recent years, sponsors are embracing a more professional approach to the management of sponsorship contracts. Failure to appropriately manage a sponsorship can pose serious threats to a brand's reputation, customer following and effectiveness (Chadwick & Thwaites, 2004). Managing a sponsee involves the incorporation of fundamental aspects such as organisation, termination, communication and the formation of contracts, rather than simply leveraging a brand's position in the market and increasing sales. For a brand to partake in a sponsorship, it expresses a willingness to create networks, establish relationships and exchange in mutually beneficial activities with an external actor (Lee & Ross, 2012).

2.11 Gender Bias in Sport

Gender in sport is a widely researched and discussed area, with many benefits being identified through the involvement of both genders in physical activity and participation in sports teams (Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, & Payne, 2013). In this case, gender is the neutral term for the two sexes (male and female). Bias is the term for unreasoned perception and or opinion (Pearson 2002; 2010). Thus, gender bias is to favour one gender exclusively.

Due to the fact that there has been so little marketing and sponsorships offered to women athletes and sports teams, this provides an underutilised area for promotion as sponsorships historically have been targeted to male athletes and teams (McDaniel, 1999). Women's sports teams may deliver an ideal demographic target market at a small price, compared to a male-dominant sport where the brand would spend a lot more for their services. A carefully executed sports sponsorship can provide the brand with competitive advantage; something that every brand is ultimately striving for (Shaw & Amis, 2001). Higgs, Weiller and Martin (2003) have identified that market forces are responsible for the underrepresentation of women's sport in all aspects of the communications media.

Research suggests that some sponsorship agreements are based on the decision maker's personal opinion, preferences and experience, as well as who would resonate most with their target audience. The choices are influenced by such factors as: education and social

background of the decision maker, competitors, corporate culture, media, and internal and external environments (Shaw & Amis, 2001). In addition, social pressures and expectations can have a significant effect on a sponsor's decisions (Shaw & Amis, 2001). Values and beliefs that the manager is exposed to (both within the company and externally) influence what is deemed acceptable in the sponsorship decision.

Shaw & Amis (2001) also found that in more male-dominated industries such as sport, women employees, particularly in management roles, feel the need to adopt masculine management styles in order to compete with their counterparts. Thus, it is unsurprising that in some industries, organisations can be influenced by masculine ideologies and rituals. Shaw and Amis (2001) also found that the opinions and beliefs held by those in positions of power and the perceived media coverage ultimately determines who to sponsor. Until those barriers and pre-conceived ideas are overcome, women's sport and sponsorship opportunities will remain the same; ultimately reflecting the decisions made in decision making processes. It is through the gendered nature of management that the marginalisation of women's sport sponsorship is generated. The following section will address gender bias in sport in more depth.

Coakley and Dunning (2000) argue sport is a gendered activity that is more passionate towards male participants than females, and thus celebrates skills and achievements accordingly. Gender bias can be influenced by a range of varying factors including social, political and economic change (Scruton & Flintoff, 2002). It would appear that gender bias is still very much a part of this industry to this day, with women's sport struggling to attract media attention and a fan base (Ridinger, 2006). Whether it be through publicity, awareness, promotion or sponsorship, female athletes have been riddled with challenges right throughout the history of sport (Hargreaves, 1994). Gender bias in sport is not a result of a select few in powerful and influential roles but instead the collaboration of a society's ideas (Hargreaves, 1994). According to McDaniel & Kinney (1998), a consumer's ability to recall and recognise a sponsor and/or sponsorship without prompting drastically differs based on gender. It is also dependent on both the recency and frequency of the ad. However, as women tend to respond more favourably towards brands that they perceive as having more genuine motives, they are becoming an attractive target market for sports marketers.

Historically, women have been excluded from a large proportion of media promotions and communications in regard to sports, with only 10% of female athletes and teams responsible for sports media coverage (Sherwood, 2017). From the media's perspective and on a larger scale for society in general, male sport is perceived as providing significantly greater value than that of women's sport (Shaw & Amis, 2001). However, women's involvement in sports-related media is on the rise, although a vast gap between the two genders contribution remains in existence (Sherwood, 2017). Australian media completed a study confirming that there is disproportionate amounts of media coverage and attention between males and females (Lumby, Caple & Greenwood, 2014). 81% of male-dominant sports received national media attention compared to 8% of female-dominant sports, with the remaining media attention deemed as 'other' (Lumby, Caple & Greenwood, 2014). From this, it was suggested that in order for female athletes and teams to receive more media attention, they need to be more successful in their sporting endeavours. In comparison, men received media coverage irrespective of their performance and successfulness within their chosen sport. However, despite the lack of female coverage, from a viewer/consumer perspective, female sport was perceived more favourably compared to males (Lumby, Caple & Greenwood, 2014).

Despite women's increasing involvement, sport remains heavily targeted towards men: "The Olympic Games must be reserved for men... we must continue to try to achieve the following definition: the solemn and periodic exaltation of male athleticism, with internationalism as a base, loyalty as a means, art for its setting, and female applause as its reward" (Koivula, 1999). However, Shaw and Amis (2001) identified that because women's sport is thought to be untouched in regard to sponsorships, those firms that enter into sponsorship deals with women's sports and athletes may be able to establish an identifiable brand image with that sport.

As women are portrayed in sport as being in supportive and encouraging roles to their male counterparts, it proves challenging for them to gain traction amongst organisations when looking for sponsorships themselves. Shaw & Amis (2001) identified that women in competitive sport often have their achievements downplayed. Women's sport has been described as "not having an immediate image equity" (Shaw & Amis, 2001); alongside the

additional aspect of lack of recognition, this makes women's sport a difficult option for sponsorship to sell.

As a method of promotion, sponsorship is a risky business venture regardless of the different actors involved. To mitigate this risk, managers may subconsciously imitate the actions of other firms that have been involved with similar marketing/advertising promotions.

Bias is present in varying forms including religious, race and age-based bias; the most obvious bias in relation to sport is gender (Velasquez & Hamilton, 2012). Examples of discrimination in sport are unfortunately common, but one particular example that is relevant involved tennis. During the initial years of the US Open, prize money was only available for men despite having a women's competition running in conjunction. This progressed into offering prize money for both genders; however, the amount of prize money greatly differed with the men's champion winning \$25,000 compared to the women's champion only winning \$11,000 (Kahn, 1991). Similar to this, another example includes the 1990 Wimbledon tournament whereby there was an 11% pay gap between men and women professional tennis players. In 1989, it was recorded that 85 professional male tennis players won over \$100,000 compared to only 34 professional female tennis players (Kahn, 1991).

Another example highlighting this gender bias was women competing in Professional Golfers Association tournaments in 1978; they received \$14,200 in prize money compared to the male counterpart winning \$43,600 in prize money for the same tournament (Marple, n.d.). Marple (n.d.) also identified that in 1980, professional women golfers received \$197,000 on an annual basis as their salary, whereas men received \$462,000 annually. These examples highlight just how difficult it is for professional female athletes to not only attain recognition for potential sponsorships, but also to compete at this level when they are faced with more challenges than incentives.

Whilst an improvement has been attempted to rectify the issue of gender bias in the sports industry, there are still many examples of where it is prevalent. Unfortunately, Barr (2018) identified through their research that, "38% of women have experienced gender discrimination in their workplace, in comparison to a fifth of the men" (p. 1.). An example discussed by Pearson (2002; 2010) was that female volleyball players were warned not to

expose themselves much whereas, a hundred years on, they are now encouraged to expose more.

Examples of gender bias in sport are hugely varying, with an obvious disparity being the salaries of professional athletes. Women's and men's salaries differ hugely; an example being the American Basketball Association with women's salary averaging \$55,000 versus \$4,000,000 for the average men's salary (Pearson, 2002; 2010). Pearson (2002; 2010) continued with this idea that, because of such disparity, women are turned off the idea of participating in sports due to the lack of opportunities. Thus, often turning their attention to relationships and academics, rather than sport or physical activity. Pearson (2002; 2010) also identified in his research that media bias proliferates gender typing in regard to how female athletes are spoken of. An example of this was in a basketball tournament in America regarding mascot names. For the women's team, the connotation is much more feminine and a much softer version of the male team's counterpart.

Athletes are not the only ones stifled by gender biases; females in managerial and coaching roles are also affected by gender biases. 80% of sport communication positions are held by men (Pearson, 2002; 2010). As a result, female administrators, coaches and managers are continually facing an uphill battle for equal opportunity. Pearson (2002; 2010) believes that lack of media attention for females and the male culture of superiority plays a part; creating the 'glass ceiling' for females in sport. Barr (2018) concurred with Pearson's (2002; 2010) research, that the increased discussion surrounding gender bias in sport can increase the number of women attaining leadership positions, whilst also addressing the remaining sexism that is still very much present right throughout the industry.

2.12 Gap in Literature

The underlying reasons and factors that influence sport sponsorship decisions are yet to be fully identified. From current research, it appears that there is not a clear rationale as to why organisations prefer to sponsor men's sports rather than women's (Shaw & Amis, 2001). As Scraton and Flintoff (2002) suggest, regardless of what sport has achieved in terms of equity, male and female's sport is still very much segregated both in commercial value as well as in the media. Along with Shaw & Amis (2001), Lee & Ross (2012), they too have identified that research is lacking in sports sponsorship decision making. Through their findings, they

have concluded that being able to understand the reasons and factors behind decision making is important. These factors have a direct relationship to the overall objective of the sponsorship as a way to justify and achieve the desired outcome (Lee & Ross, 2012).

Shaw and Amis (2001) identified that little research has been undertaken to investigate the reasons as to why managers and sponsors are more inclined to invest in men rather than women. As women's involvement with sport is increasing, and they are becoming more significant as a target market, in order to fully understand the implications and role of gender within sponsorship, further study needs to be undertaken (McDaniel & Kinney, 1998). Thus, it is evident that there is a gap in existing literature regarding the reasons and protocol for decision making surround male and female athletes.

It is from this identified gap in the literature that I hope to identify the factors that influence the decision to sponsor male or female athletes. Although sponsorship on the whole is a widely researched and discussed topic within the marketing sector, gender discrimination has not yet been looked into as an influencing factor for sports sponsorship.

Chapter Three – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology and chosen methods of this research. It includes justification surrounding the purpose of the research, as well as the researcher's understanding and knowledge about the theoretical approach. The following sections express the theoretical perspective, methodology, method, participants and techniques used for data analysis. To conclude this section, ethical considerations are included, along with the strategies to ensure trustworthiness, credibility and reliability, summarised by a conclusion.

3.2 Research Purpose

Sports marketing is defined as the marketing processes implemented to promote sports products, players and teams through the association and connection of sport (Shank & Lyberger, 2015). The corporate sponsorship of sports and sporting events is quickly becoming one of the fastest growing areas of marketing (McDaniel & Kinney, 1998). One area for study is the disparity between the gender of athletes and teams sponsored. Within the New Zealand sports industry, the recognition, awareness and funding that women's netball receives compared to other sports is significantly less (Kirkeby, 2018). This is true for the sports of rugby and netball, which were the focus of this research, whilst also being apparent amongst other sports in which both genders are competing (Lough & Irwin, 2001). This may suggest that men's sports teams and athletes are favoured and often considered a more viable sponsorship option compared to women's sports teams. Gwinner & Bennett (2008) identified that sponsorship is a technique implemented by brands and companies who are attempting to stimulate awareness and exposure for consumers, in regard to both the product or service offering and the team/athlete fronting the sponsorship. Thus, consumers are more interested in, and have fonder feelings towards, sports they are already familiar or involved with (Bee & Khale, 2006). As a result, sponsors may be more inclined to choose sports that have a larger following such as rugby due to the already established awareness and recognition levels. These larger followings are attributable to effective relationship management as awareness is generated through image, success and trust (Bee & Khale, 2006).

Sherwood (2017) identified that women's sport and their presence in the media is only just beginning to increase in popularity. A study by the Australian media found that there is a

disproportionate amount of media coverage and attention for male athletes ahead of female athletes (Lumby, Caple & Greenwood, 2014). Lumby, Caple & Greenwood (2014) found that 81% of male-dominant sports receive national media attention compared to 8% of female-dominant sports. Local sports teams will be the focus of this study, one male-dominated and the other female-dominated.

From the literature review, there is a clear gap in literature regarding the perceptual barriers of those making sponsorship decisions in relation to women's sponsorship in sport. The underlying reasons and factors that influence these decisions are yet to be identified. According to Lee & Ross (2012), research is lacking in sports sponsorship decision making. They suggest that it is important to understand the reasons and factors behind the sponsorship decision making. These factors have a direct impact on the overall objective of the sponsorship and are used as a way to justify and achieve the desired outcome (Lee & Ross, 2012).

This research will look at those choosing who to sponsor, as well as those being selected for sponsorship to understand the reasoning, justification and selection criteria for successful sponsorships. Sponsorship is a selective method of promotion and dependent on those in a position of power, thus the appropriate criteria is also subjective depending on the sponsor. There appears to be little appeal for sponsors to invest in the sport of netball compared to rugby, shown through the differing number of sponsors each sport has. Therefore, understanding and identifying the perceptual barriers and true reason as to why sponsors offer sponsorships, will better position those athletes currently struggling for opportunities. It will potentially create a more 'even playing field' for athletes and enable those struggling for funding and recognition to excel.

A better understanding of the reasoning behind sponsorship decision making will prove useful for both brands looking to sponsor and athletes looking to be sponsored. Research suggests we are lacking an understanding surrounding the sports sponsorship decision-making process (Shaw & Amis 2001; Lee & Ross 2012). These factors have a direct relationship to the overall objective of the sponsorship as a way to justify and achieve the desired outcome (Lee & Ross, 2012). Shaw & Amis (2001) identified that for those women competing in sport, their achievements are often downplayed. As women's sport has been

described as not having an immediate image equity, the additional aspect of lack of recognition makes women's sport a difficult option for sponsorship to sell (Shaw & Amis, 2001). It is for this reason, that an attempt to uncover the influence of gender and the subconscious decision-making processes of those in positions of power will be made to create awareness around sponsorship equality. Research into the influence of gender within sports sponsorship will attempt to uncover the reasons as to why woman athletes have been stifled in comparison to their male counterparts. Whether this lack of opportunity is simply due to gender bias or other varying reasons will be discussed later in-depth.

This research attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What are the factors to a successful sponsorship?
- What are the factors that influence the sponsorship decision-making process?
- How does gender influence sponsorship selection in sport?

3.3 Research Approach

This section will discuss both the epistemology and theoretical perspective of the researcher. The epistemology section will explain the beliefs the researcher adopts relating to how knowledge is formed. It will also address the relationship between the researcher and participants. The theoretical perspective section then addresses how the knowledge will be conveyed from the participants to the researcher.

3.3.1 Epistemology

Epistemology refers to a theory of knowledge that helps to distinguish how we see and understand the world in which we exist. It refers to the beliefs of the researcher in regard to how knowledge is created (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). It is inclusive of methods and scope; and addresses the meaning behind differing beliefs, opinions and perceptions. It forces us to question whether or not reality is existent on its own or, alternatively, whether we associate and apply our own interpretation of meaning to our lived experiences. This research has adopted constructivism as its epistemological belief. The researcher is of the opinion that knowledge and beliefs are developed through interpretations of their own behaviour, as well as the behaviour of others (Crotty, 1998; Greene, 1994).

A constructivist has a collaboratively constructed understanding and perception of the world and reality, which forms the basis of shared understanding (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018). This epistemology acknowledges the researcher's beliefs about the development of knowledge, as well as the relationship between the researcher and participants (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Social constructivism emphasises that people create different meanings and associations for the same object, resulting in differing perceptions. As there is no 'one meaning' for any one thing, realities are unique and influenced by both internal and external factors experienced by an individual; we are referred to by Chua (1986) as "self-interpretive beings". This epistemology suggests that everyone interprets reality in varying ways, as our experiences and pre-existing knowledge have a heavy influence on our interpretations (Crotty, 1998).

Social constructivism is a segment within constructivism as a whole. It focuses on the significance of culture and social interactions when developing meaning and associations. How people relate and interact with one another can further develop and enhance these assumptions (Chua, 1986). It is through these interactions that meaning is formed (Crotty, 1998). A large part of this assumption places emphasis on symbols and icons. These are used commonly as tools to illustrate meanings and associations. These symbols and the epistemology provide both meaning and relevance to this research.

The researcher has adopted constructivism as an approach to guide the research. Thus, the researcher believes that there is no single reality or truth. People form their own perceptions and beliefs about sports teams and players through experiences, culture, familiarity and interactions. This is consistent with the literature in that people have varying preferences about sports they choose to follow or have an invested interest in, based on the meanings they have often subconsciously created. This notion also aligns with the constructivist approach as it supports the belief that individuals are responsible for the creation of meaning, dependent on shared experiences and understandings.

Constructivism sees both the research and researcher as one. Thus, the researcher engages with a range of participants to understand their constructs surrounding the given topic (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Based on this, constructions and meanings are formed as the interviews with participants take place. Therefore, meaning is created through interactions with the

researcher, with their intentions being transparent (Schwandt, 1994). As well as this, this epistemology is appropriate for this research as it accepts that there are varying views and opinions from participants surrounding sport and sponsorship. It also provides the foundation from which a conclusion surrounding sponsorship decision making can be formed through a consensus.

3.3.2 Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective refers to the philosophical approach, which determines the methodology and the grounding of logic (Crotty, 1998). According to Arnold & Fischer (1994), “language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs” (p. 58). It provides a bridge from the past to the present which every individual can understand. As part of this research, hermeneutics have been used to further enhance the understanding of the topic.

Hermeneutics is responsible for the meaning and interpretation of knowledge through language. According to Ricoeur (1981), hermeneutics allow for the transition from possibility to actuality, which is particularly relevant to this research. It also allows for reflection, which can develop into the endless pursuit of knowledge and reason (Ricoeur, 1981). Hermeneutics are also linked to the epistemology used in this research; being that perceptions and interpretations differ depending on the individual and can be heavily influenced by their background and experiences. Due to the nature of language and the creation of meaning, there is no correct interpretation or one single truth. How verbal interaction is interpreted is dependent on prior knowledge, beliefs and culture. As a result, the researcher has interpreted participant’s constructions using hermeneutics techniques (Arnold & Fischer, 1994).

A part of hermeneutics is the acknowledgement of the sharing of meaning (Crotty, 1998). In order to recognise the meaning of a construction, an individual must have the foundation in order to interpret the construct; referred to as having a pre-understanding (Crotty, 1998). Whether we realise it or not, we have a pre-understanding for a subject matter. A pre-understanding exists prior to interpretation, as the researcher has already been exposed to the world in which the subject matter and participants exist. Explanation of the research topic is grounded in a pre-understanding (Palmer, 1969). Palmer (1969) goes on to say that the researcher must bring their pre-understanding of the material and situation to the whole

problem. However, it is acknowledged that the researcher must be aware of their pre-understanding, in order to focus equally on all areas rather than one that they may be more familiar with (Arnold & Fischer, 1994).

It is for this reason that the perceptual barriers for sponsorship are at the forefront of this study, in an attempt to get participants to vocalise their true thoughts. As the research is probing into the influence of gender on sports sponsorship decision making and to uncover the true and underlying reasons for sponsorship choices, hermeneutics seemed the most appropriate and suitable choice in which to base the theoretical perspective.

When probing for more information, it must be done in an engaging and stimulating way. The interview should be viewed to be uncovering information, stimulating the willingness of the interviewee to provide information. By using hermeneutics, it enables the researcher to more critically answer the research questions. It allows for the understanding of constructions, and that these can be effectively communicated through in-depth interviews with participants. It is also consistent with the methodology of constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1985), as hermeneutics believe meaning can be understood through communication and constructivists believe that meaning is both constructed socially and subject to the interviewer. It also enables the comparison of the researcher's pre-understanding of the topic and the post-understanding, promoting comparison between the two perceptions.

As previously mentioned, an attempt will be made to uncover the pre-understanding of sponsorship resulting in the addition of knowledge and truth. This confirms that qualitative methods are the most appropriate for this research as they facilitate a deeper reflection and understanding needed for these constructions (Robson & Foster, 1989). Following on from this, interpretive techniques are implemented between the researcher and participants to identify themes and common opinions (Hirschman & Thompson, 1997). This will allow for a more open discussion and richer exploration of the influence of gender in regard to sports sponsorship.

3.4 Methodology

The following two sections describe the difference in quantitative and qualitative research methods. It will also discuss which method was chosen and deemed the most appropriate approach for this research. This methodology details the research design, as well as a set of methods that have been selected based on suitability to best meet the research objective.

3.4.1 Qualitative vs. Quantitative Approach

Researchers who implement a quantitative approach for their research typically present data in a statistical form (Golafshani, 2003). In comparison, a qualitative approach provides an in-depth and subjective representation and account of the consumer (Calder, 1977). Qualitative research seeks to understand the underlying meaning behind realities. Qualitative data collection techniques include semi-structured in-depth interviews or focus groups to gather data. Interview questions or discussions of this nature are often open ended, leaving the participants responsible for the findings; of which they determine how much, and the depth of, information they are willing to disclose. These open-ended questions place emphasis on relationships, communication and the sharing of ideas and experiences. In comparison, a quantitative research approach predominantly retrieves data and findings through surveys and experiments. Qualitative research allows for the discovery of processes and trends which may be known only to the participants on a subconscious level (Flick, Kardoff & Steinke, 2004). This method of research also enables the exploration of new theories and ideas, which provides assistance for when the researcher attempts to question the participant for further perceptions and opinions (Morris, Leung, Ames & Lickel, 1999).

3.4.2 Qualitative Justification

A qualitative approach was implemented for this research. As humans develop knowledge based on personal experiences, the choice to use qualitative methods of data collection for this research was appropriate (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). In-depth interviews and formal conversations are thought by Legard, Keegan & Ward (2014) to reproduce a personalised recount of the social world. Whilst there are obvious differences between a normal day-to-day conversation and a structured in-depth interview, this method was the most appropriate to use when attempting to answer the research question. In-depth interviews allow the interviewee to express their true beliefs and opinions in an honest and unassuming

environment. They experience no external pressures, so often feel relaxed and open when answering questions.

The epistemological beliefs of the researcher also suggested that a qualitative approach would be the most suitable, as the researcher believes there is not one single reality of how sport sponsorships are chosen. Interview questions were left open ended, enabling the participant to give a detailed and in-depth account of their experiences and beliefs. As the topic of this research lends itself to varying realities and a potentially sensitive topic for discussion, in-depth interviews allowed for the participant to feel comfortable giving honest and true reflections without feeling the pressure or presence from other participants. By interviewing a range of participants who are involved in varying aspects of the sports industry, this provided detailed reflections of varying realities based on experiences, culture and knowledge. Thus, qualitative research enabled a more comprehensive exploration of the influence of gender surrounding sport sponsorship.

3.5 In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviews are a qualitative research technique, involving the formation of questions surrounding the relevant research topic, which are then presented to participants. They are predominantly conducted with a small number of participants to attain their knowledge and thoughts surrounding the proposed topic or issue (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Due to the nature of these interviews, they allow for the researcher to gain a more in-depth and detailed account of the participants' views. In-depth interviews provide a relaxed atmosphere in which the participant feels comfortable and safe to express information they may not be willing to share amongst others. This enables the collection of more in-depth and honest responses.

By implementing this qualitative technique, it enabled the researcher to uncover the influence of gender in regard to sport sponsorship in a structured, timely and in-depth manner. In-depth interviews were not the only source of data. Along with this method, association techniques were also analysed using photos from a magazine, which is discussed later in this section. This provided the researcher with a visual element to the study and provided an additional layer for justification surrounding the research topic.

As the interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes in length, time restrictions were not a concern for this study. The number of questions the interviewer asked was not restricted, however only one magazine was provided for participant analysis. The interviews that were carried out were audio taped, with the participant giving consent prior to commencing the interview. Upon completion of the interview, they were transcribed by the researcher verbatim.

In order for in-depth interviews to be considered effective, they must build on intimacy (Chua, 1986). They resemble a friendship as the researcher and participant have a shared sense of trust and vulnerability. As the participant is expressing a deep and often subconscious level of thought, the researcher must present as understanding and engaged (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2001). Taylor & Bogdan (1998) state that in-depth interviews are an appropriate method of data collection when research objectives are clear and known. Due to the fact the interviewer has a prior knowledge and opinions about the research topic, bias will be unavoidable. Thus, questions can be adapted and morphed to suit the participant.

The processes involved for planning and conducting the in-depth interviews are detailed in the following sections.

3.5.1 Interview Plan

A selection of individuals were identified by the researcher as having necessary insights and involvement with either netball, rugby, marketing or sponsorship. Each individual was contacted by the researcher either via email or phone and provided with a brief account of the research objective and how their participation in the study would be greatly beneficial. A more detailed information sheet was either included in the initial email or sent to them subsequently. From this point, participants either agreed or disagreed to partake in the study. If they agreed, a time and location was decided upon to conduct the interview at their convenience. Alternatively, if no reply was received from the initial attempt at contact it was assumed that the individual was not willing to partake in the study.

3.5.2 Association Techniques (Photos)

Projective techniques were implemented in this research to uncover the innermost feelings and thoughts that participants have and may not wish to express verbally (Donoghue, 2000). There are five common enabling techniques: association, completion, construction, choice ordering and expressive (Will, Eadie & MacAskill, 1996). Association techniques require the participant to respond immediately when presented with a stimulus, thus expressing the first thing that comes to mind (Donoghue, 2000). As the researcher was aware of the original stimulus that participants are being presented with, it enables them to differentiate between the participant's response and the original stimulus (Haire, 1950).

By implementing this associative technique, it enabled the interviewer to gain an in-depth understanding of the participant's perceptions of sports teams and sponsorships. In this case, the pictures chosen reflect and communicate thoughts and beliefs about sponsorship that the participant may not normally be willing to share or discuss. Perceptions of sponsorship and sports teams differ hugely. Thus, this exercise enabled the interviewer to gain insight into what provoked thoughts and associations.

3.5.3 Choice of Magazines

The magazines that were chosen for the association exercise were New Zealand based, either featuring netball or rugby. Because this research focuses on only those two sports, the choice to only choose from those types of magazines was justified. This ensured relevant images and sport related associations were made by participants and eliminated the likelihood of obtaining irrelevant and non-meaningful associations. The magazine that the participant was supplied with differed for each respondent, as it was dependent on which sport the participant was associated with. For example, for those involved with rugby and the Crusaders, the New Zealand rugby magazine was selected as it was deemed the most appropriate and applicable. Alternatively, for those participants associated with netball and the Tactix, Women's Fitness was used. As netball does not have a magazine dedicated entirely to the sport (unlike rugby), the next best alternative was used; whilst it was not netball specific, this magazine contained ample images relating to sport and gender.

The researcher chose not to use generic magazines, such as 'Women's Weekly' or 'Women's Day' for this exercise, due to the fact that there were not enough sporting references for

participants to identify. The magazines chosen for this exercise needed to contain images of sport and gender. Whilst the written content of the magazine was of no relevance to this particular study, ensuring that there were a sufficient number of images for participants to choose from was the main priority for selection criteria. This may present as a form of bias. Had the interviewer chosen non-relevant magazines, insufficient evidence would have been collected. Thus, sports-related magazines were chosen to ensure relevant results were obtained from this exercise. The potential bias from this decision will be discussed further in the limitations section of the report.

3.6 Method

The following sections discuss how the methodologies were used to obtain responses from the chosen participants. It is also inclusive of the procedures used by the interviewer for the in-depth interviews, as well as the pre-testing process and method for data collection.

3.6.1 Development of Selection Criteria

The selection criteria for the in-depth interview questions were created through analysis of other similar studies that have previously been conducted. A series of questions were developed by the researcher in order to gain insightful and informative responses from participants. The research objectives were discussed thoroughly, and questions were created in a way that enabled these overall research objectives to be answered by participants. It was important to have questions that were open ended, allowing the participants to elaborate accordingly and provide full and extensive answers. The final interview questions were then tested and, as discussed in the following section, appropriate changes were made in an attempt to improve the in-depth interviews.

3.6.2 Pretesting of Interview Questions

In-depth interviews were pre-tested twice with two different Bachelor of Commerce students. Both pre-test interviews were conducted in the same manner, however different magazines were given to each student corresponding to the two different sports that this research focused on. The following points were identified from the pre-tests and changes were made accordingly:

- Nine interview questions were deemed too many. Participants seemed to become unengaged and disinterested in the questions being asked.

- Questions needed to be specific to either the sponsor or sponsee depending on who was being interviewed. Rather than including questions from both perspectives, a narrower approach would be more beneficial as sponsors may not be able to answer questions from a sponsees perspective, and vice versa.
- Prompters such as “could you please elaborate”, “why do you think that is” need to be more frequently used by the interviewer. This would encourage more elaborate and in-depth answers from the participants and help gain a more insightful and detailed understanding of the proposed topic.
- More precise instructions and requirements are needed for the magazine activity. Participants need to have explained to them, in detail, the purpose of the magazine exercise and how it is to be completed. This will reduce any uncertainty the participant may have about the activity.
- Two magazines were too many. Participants felt time pressured to circle associations in both magazines and lost focus. As a result, one magazine was supplied which allowed ample time for participants to flick through and make any associations or observations.

Subsequent to the pre-test, the following changes were made:

- Six interview questions were decided upon. Refer to appendix A.
- All questions were appropriate for both sponsors and sponsees.
- A reminder to give detailed and precise instructions about the magazine association exercise to reduce confusion.
- One magazine was provided for each participant rather than two. This was because each participant had associations to only one sport. If, however, they were involved with both rugby and netball, they would have been asked to complete the exercise with two magazines (one for rugby and one for netball). But, in the case of this research, this was not required. Limitations to this section of the interviews will be discussed in the limitations section.

In-depth interviews were conducted using participants involved with rugby, netball and basketball. Participants, eight in total, were those that agreed to partake in the study. More participants were contacted prior to commencing the in-depth interviews but they never made contact with the researcher agreeing to the study, thus were not interviewed. In most cases,

the interviewer met with the participants at their requested location and time. For those participants not based in Christchurch, the interview was conducted over the phone. Prior to the interview commencing, participants were provided with a consent form to sign, outlining the details of the research and use of data collated from the interviews. Thus, participant consent was attained prior to commencing each interview.

3.6.3 Data Collection

The in-depth interviews commenced with the interviewer asking relevant questions, as shown in Appendix A. Up to 60 minutes was allowed for each interview, inclusive of the time necessary to complete the association exercise. The same process was completed for each in-depth interview with the interviewer allowing the participant to express any concerns, queries or questions they had prior to completion.

For the magazine activity, participants were provided with a magazine corresponding to the sport they are most involved with (either netball or rugby). They were asked to circle anything in the magazine that they associated with either sponsorship or their respective sports team. Prior to commencing the exercise, the interviewer requested that no players from professional sports teams were included as this association was deemed too obvious. If participants were able to select players or teams they were familiar with, it would not provide any new data for analysis. These exceptions ensured that the participants' choices were in no way influenced and provided an unbiased representation of associations.

Upon the completion of the exercise, the in-depth interview concluded. The researcher then analysed each magazine, along with the verbal section of the interview. This exercise allowed the interviewer to understand the subconscious thoughts that participants had regarding their sport. Participants projected their perceptions of their sport through the magazine and associated images.

The interviewer endeavoured to create an informal and natural environment in an attempt to relax participants. Firstly, this was created through the location as participants were able to choose this themselves. They chose a location that was familiar to them often in either their workplace or local café. Furthermore, the interviewer ensured that the participants felt relaxed and calm about answering the questions, providing them with ample time to answer.

Questions were open ended, meaning that the participant had freedom to answer the questions however they pleased (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2001). This allowed the participant to give a thorough explanation and detailed examples, without feeling restricted or under a time constraint.

Silences throughout the interviews were not filled by the interviewer unless the participant requested an explanation of the question. As Guion, Diehl & McDonald (2001) identified, it is paramount that the interviewer implements active listening skills to adapt to the conversation and probe for further information, should they feel it is required for a more in-depth answer. In addition, the interviewer should seek clarity and understanding from the participant surrounding their answers. By doing this it would allow the interviewer to correctly interpret the response and question any uncertainty by asking the participant to elaborate.

Participants were made clear that should they not wish to answer any questions, it would not be a problem. The researcher did as minimal talking as possible, however questions may have needed to be altered slightly to allow for probing and a better understanding. Probes such as 'could you please explain' and 'why do you think that is' were used throughout the interviews to further delve into the participant's thoughts and experiences. As Guion, Diehl & McDonald (2001) identified, these probing techniques are thought provoking techniques used to further develop answers and gain more insightful recollections.

These in-depth interviews were audio recorded, with the permission of the participant attained prior to commencing. They were then transcribed verbatim. This ensured that the researcher was able to reflect on the interviews, rather than relying on memory. Detailed notes were kept for each interview, identifying reoccurring themes, iterations and reflections that were of interest. This ensured that the researcher was able to reflect on the in-depth interviews, rather than relying on memory to recall what was discussed. By doing this, the researcher was able to compare responses to further develop and create shared meaning (see section 3.3.2).

Upon completion of all eight in-depth interviews, it was clear to the interviewer that themes were beginning to reoccur, therefore halting the collection of responses. The analysis process for the in-depth interviews is explained in section 3.7 Data Analysis.

3.6.4 Participants

As a result of the research question and theoretical perspective, in-depth interviews of both netball and rugby players, as well as individuals involved with marketing and sponsorship for the respective sports, were conducted. This was done to create an encompassing view and interpretation of the perceptual barriers to sport sponsorship. These opinions were explained by participants in the interviews and then summarised and analysed by the researcher. This enabled the collection of rich, in-depth answers relating to the participant's thoughts on the proposed topic. In-depth interviews involve facilitating interviews with a small number of selected respondents to understand and explore their interpretations and opinions on the proposed idea or topic (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Interviews and formal conversations are thought by Legard, Keegan & Ward (2014) to reproduce a personalised recount of the social world. Having rich data is necessary as it is needed to fully understand the construction and subsequent reconstruction of the participants' ideas (Spiggle, 1994).

Participants were recruited through contacts and relationships established prior to the research investigation. Consent was attained from each participant prior to completing the interview, following all ethical regulations. The researcher gave a short explanation about what the research consisted of and what would be expected of the participants should they choose to be a part of the study. An information sheet was then given to them for their convenience. Initially, 12 participants were contacted though email requesting their involvement for the study. However, eight participants replied to the email expressing their interest and willingness to participate. These participants ranged from sponsees to sponsors and included some individuals responsible for marketing in their chosen sport. These candidates were appropriate for this research as purposive sampling is a frequently used technique in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As a result, the researcher used hermeneutic techniques to understand and interpret each participant's opinions and experiences (Klein & Myers, 1999). As the researcher was also a netball player and was involved with rugby, this group of participants was considered appropriate. The contacted participants had been involved with sport and sponsorship for an extended period of time,

thus had ample experience with sponsorship and the subject area, enabling the provision of in-depth and worldly insights (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Table 3.1 shows the eight participants who agreed to partake in the study, including their gender, their role within their sport and which sport they are involved with.

Table 3.1 *Summary of Participants*

	Gender	Profession	Sport
Informant 1	Male	Coach	Rugby
Informant 2	Male	Marketing Manager	Basketball
Informant 3	Male	Marketing Manager	Rugby
Informant 4	Female	Player	Netball
Informant 5	Male	Past player now Coach	Rugby
Informant 6	Female	Marketing Manager	Rugby
Informant 7	Female	Past player now Manager	Netball
Informant 8	Female	Coach	Netball

3.7 Data Analysis

All in-depth interviews that were conducted were transcribed into Microsoft Word documents precisely by the interviewer. The interviews were then analysed by hand and hand-coded notes from the interviewer. Upon completion of the transcriptions, the interviewer ensured the transcriptions were an exact replication of the recorded interviews. By doing this, the interviewer became even more emerged in the responses, allowing for an initial understanding of responses as well as identifying any emerging themes or similarities (Douglas, 2002). The analysis of data was hand-coded, sentence by sentence. Segmenting common and reoccurring themes was done systematically and with care to ensure validity

and consistency. During the interviews, relevant notes or memos were made to record anything that may attract the interviewer's attention (Burnard, 1991). This enabled the interviewer to become more immersed in the data.

As the interviewer was present in the interview, they were able to notice any obvious or interesting changes mannerisms. For example, if a participant felt uncomfortable about answering a question, they may begin to shift in their seat or avoid eye contact. These mannerisms could only be documented by the interviewer and are of significance, particularly when attempting to identify the more underlying and subconscious opinions. As Crotty (1998) discussed, hermeneutics is based on the recognition of shared meaning. Therefore, understanding the participant's responses though not only verbal answers but also mannerisms and non-verbal communication, enabled the researcher to fully understand the participant's perspective; creating and developing the shared meaning as previously discussed (see section 3.3.2). The themes were then categorised which accounted for most of the data obtained from the interviews (Burnard, 1991). This process enabled the researcher to accumulate appropriate quotes corresponding to the relevant themes (Douglas, 2002).

3.8 Trustworthiness

This research acknowledges trustworthiness for both reliability and validity (Guba & Lincoln, 2000). Both of these areas believe in one single reality or truth which is inconsistent with the researcher's epistemology. However, credibility, confirmability and dependability are factors that will be addressed in the following sections as they are associated with qualitative research. Each aspect of trustworthiness will be addressed below with regard to how it differs from both reliability and validity. Ensuring trustworthiness is paramount as it is crucial for the research to be viewed as credible (Guba & Lincoln, 2000).

3.8.1 Transferability

For this research, transferability refers to external validity. This can be defined as how well the results of a particular piece of research could be applied with varying measures and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Due to the nature and beliefs of this research, those being that each individual has differing constructions based on personal experiences, the findings are not expected to be generalised across the population. As transferability focuses more on having particular and descriptive information, this allows the researcher to analyse

the findings based on their own interests and population of choice. Therefore, the responsibility of transferability ultimately lies with the researcher who is wanting to transfer relevant findings.

3.8.2 Dependability

Reliability is the term that corresponds to dependability and refers to how effectively the findings of the study can be replicated should similar methods and participants be used (Ford, 1975). Dependability assumes that there is one reality to be discovered; it seeks to incorporate numerous constructions for the particular topic and thus assume the exact findings are unable to be found (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Dependability refers to how consistent results are over the given period of time, as well as how accurately they represent the majority of interviewees (Golafshani, 2003). Whilst dependability is difficult to measure in a qualitative context, ensuring trustworthiness is paramount. To ensure dependability with this study, detailed interpretive notes were made by the interviewer/researcher to explain the logic of interpretation.

3.8.3 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to whether or not the results of the research are consistent to the intended outcome of the research and whether multiple researchers are in agreement on the interpretation of the respective findings. Validity can be used as a measurement tool for research and a way to ensure intentions and processes are appropriately grounded. For this research to be unfalsifiable, it must not be influenced by motivations or personal preferences. The use of the researcher's notes and the triangulation of data was used to ensure confirmability for this research. Two external judges viewed the findings, transcripts and researcher's notes to support that the findings were based on data, rather than manipulated by the researcher's personal constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

3.8.4 Credibility

For qualitative research, credibility corresponds to internal validity and whether or not the research has eliminated the possibility of other explanations for the respective findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). From this, credibility assumes there is 'one truth' to explain the phenomenon. However, due to the epistemology of this research, 'multiple truths' are being uncovered through the varying responses. Thus, credibility proves to be the most appropriate

method to ensure trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). For this research to be deemed credible, the researcher must prove that multiple truths have been interpreted and represented accurately. Credibility was justified through the use of triangulation whereby, transcripts and recordings of the interviews were reviewed through peer debriefing (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). These two expert judges read over the transcriptions thoroughly to ensure an accurate account from each interview was given. This allowed for an independent assessment of whether the interpretations that the researcher had initially identified made logical sense. Thus, ensuring the credibility of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

3.8.5 Ethical Considerations

Due to the unobtrusive nature of this research study and in-depth interviews, there were minimal ethical concerns involved. Any ethical concerns that were present surrounded ensuring all participants provided consent/approval prior to taking part in the study as it was a voluntary exercise, as well as ensuring responses remained anonymous from participants. The University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee provided ethical approval for this study on the August 10th, 2018.

Chapter Four - Analysis & Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the findings of this research. As discussed in the previous chapter, the researcher has attempted to portray a detailed account of the findings. This research was obtained through nine in-depth interviews. The following findings are supported through text units provided from the interview transcripts.

Within New Zealand, there is a large emphasis placed on the need to participate in sport from a young age. It not only provides health and wellness benefits but also social interaction. It can also provide purpose and drive for those competing as they work towards achieving success within their chosen field. However, the more competitive one/a team becomes, the costlier the encounter. Thus, when competing at a national level a sponsor is often required to help fund expenses in exchange for a whole host of promotional and awareness benefits for the brand. The many sports on offer in New Zealand, some more well-known than others, have varying levels of sponsors; some being inundated with opportunities whilst others are expected to fund the commitment themselves.

Upon analysis of the data from the in-depth interviews, three major and reoccurring themes have been discerned. These three themes are explained individually, by revealing relevant subthemes that make up each major theme. A detailed explanation of how each subtheme contributes to one of the three major themes, is identified from the findings and then discussed.

The three themes relating to perceptual barriers to sports sponsorship are sponsorship selection, the influence of gender and the success of a sponsorship. Sponsorship selection is how a team or individual athlete is deemed by a sponsor as the most suitable candidate(s) for sponsorship. The influence of gender refers to whether or not this plays a part in the decision-making process of a sponsor. A successful sponsorship extends to more than just revenue but also includes brand awareness, key performance indicators (KPIs) and the formation of partnerships. The following sections will provide the context of this research and a detailed explanation of the three themes and relating subthemes.

4.2 Context

The context for this research surrounds the decision-making process regarding sports sponsorships. The context extends to players and their perspectives and experiences with sponsorships, as well as sponsors and those involved with selection. As discussed in previous sections, the focus of this research has been on rugby and netball. Therefore, the research has been confined to these sports. However, similar decision-making processes and influences may be experienced in other sports. The following sections provide a thorough discussion of both themes and sub themes.

4.3 Sponsorship Selection

During the in-depth interviews it was identified that, according to the interviewee, there are many factors that influence how and why a sponsor makes their sponsorship selection. It was noted that a sponsor's decision on who to sponsor and why, was attributable to a whole host of varying reasons, including intentions, financial resources, relationships, awareness and notoriety. Sponsors are confronted with the choice of who to sponsor, thus make an informed sponsorship selection based on internal decisions and agreements.

When a sponsorship decision is made, it is very rarely left to one individual; instead requiring the input of many like-minded individuals involved with the brand who are offering the sponsorship. It is for this reason that all sports have differing sponsors. As individuals show invested interest in passions and hobbies, this can often influence decisions such as sponsorship. Many interviewees suggested in their interviews that a sponsor must be invested, passionate and enthusiastic about their chosen sponsee. It therefore comes as no surprise that sponsors err towards teams or individual athletes that align with and compete in sports they are interested in. When making a sponsorship selection, sponsors are confronted by a whole host of varying factors that influence their decisions. The subthemes that have been extracted from the interviews are success, mutual benefit, following and image; *these* are explained in detail in the below sections.

4.3.1 Sporting Success

The text units show that there was a strong connection felt by interviewees between success and sponsorship selection. Sporting success was a reoccurring subtheme of sponsorship selection in the interviews, with every participant referring to it. Informant 5 stated that “*a sponsor wants to be associated with a team that performs well on and off the field, so I think*

having winning and performance goals is really important". The same informant goes on to say, *"I think it's easy to sell a sponsorship in an environment where your team is successful. And it's not just winning a title once every 10 years, I think it's over time"*. During the magazine picture association exercise, participants who were involved with the sport of rugby often identified symbols or photos that reflected success, for example, a cup or a trophy was identified and circled. Whereas, for those involved with the sport of netball who completed the same association exercise, success was not identified as frequently.

Sporting success is a measurable factor and has a definitive outcome. Thus, it makes for an easy way for sponsors to identify successful teams for sponsorship consideration. As all sports teams and individual athletes strive for success, it is a common goal shared between all sports, athletes and competitions. It is a common belief that success makes a team more appealing to sponsor. This was a shared view by informants, with informant 1 stating, *"obviously winning is important"*, and informant 4 stating, *"success is a major factor, I guess that's how a lot of companies determine where they sponsor"*. Winning increases team and player awareness and attracts new followers to the sport whilst keeping existing ones engaged (Roy & Cornwell, 2004). This was supported by informant 3 who stated that *"winning is definitely a good driving factor; it is easier to get sponsors if the team is performing well"*.

It is not only sports teams and athletes that experience competition. Brands and companies also compete for clients, knowledge and capabilities in order to improve their effectiveness and efficiency (Barney, 1991). As a result, identifying and creating a partnership with a team they deem to be successful provides the brand with a competitive advantage over competitors, should they choose to use this method of advertising. By doing this, they are effectively 'joining forces' to create a unique partnership (Barney, 1991). From this we see that sponsors can relate more easily to teams and athletes that are successful, thus influencing their decision making.

4.3.2 Mutual Benefit

Across the interviews, it became evident that mutual benefit for both the sponsor and sponsee contributed to sponsorship selection. Interviewees discussed the importance of both parties attaining some form of benefit and ensuring that it is, what informant 8 describes as, a *"give-and-take relationship"*. Informant 6 stated that it was *"definitely mutual benefit but it's also making sure that you are delivering on what that benefit is"*. It was noted that these benefits

will be different in most cases for the sponsor and team or individual athletes, illustrated through informant 5 stating that “*obviously sponsors look at their needs but they also look at the team’s benefit too*”. It was reiterated throughout the majority of the interviews that sponsors must create an environment for the athlete(s) to flourish and benefit also; an environment, as informant 4 states, “*where both parties benefit would probably be the key thing*”.

Sponsorship decisions are based on who the sponsors feel can give them sufficient benefits and vice versa. Informant 1 illustrates this by stating that “*both parties have got to get things out of it first and foremost*”. Agreements where one party benefits significantly more than the other can often result in conflict, tension and resentment, according to the informants in this study. This makes for an unhealthy and unsuccessful sponsorship agreement. Sponsorship agreements that are based on ‘give-and-take’ relationships are the most successful, shown through supporting text throughout this section. This notion of mutual benefit was a contributing factor for sponsors and the sponsorship decisions they make.

4.3.3 Fan following

Another subtheme identified under the overarching theme of sponsorship selection was fan following. From the quotes illustrated in Table 4.1, we can see that the size/number of followers a team or individual athlete has is an influential factor when making a sponsorship selection. Brands often associate themselves with athletes that have a large number of followers, thus increasing the likelihood of brand awareness, exposure and publicity. In most cases, the fan following is the sponsor’s target market. As a result, a sponsor was more likely to align with a team or individual athlete that has a similar following of their target market. As previously mentioned, the larger the following the more likely the sponsor can target more of its target market at one point in time, thus influencing their sponsorship selection.

Table 4.1 *Support for sub-theme fan following.*

Supporting Quotes	Participant
Appropriate target market for the brand. A brewery for example would be more inclined to sponsor a male dominant sport rather than female. Proven by a netball team	Informant 6 (Female)

losing a sponsorship because it was deemed 'inappropriate'.	
It's sometimes not about the athlete or the team but it's about who follows that athlete and who follows that team.	Informant 5 (Male)
It's about business and reach and the number of eye balls.	Informant 5 (Male)
It's entirely about audience.	Informant 2 (Male)

4.3.4 Image

From the in-depth interviews that were conducted, it emerged that an athlete's image and how they were perceived had a significant impact on their level of appeal for sponsorship selection. Image is the term used to express how a team or athlete is viewed in the public arena and how they are perceived by their fans and followers. Lough & Iwrin (2001), identified in their research that the enhancement of an athlete's image often increases brand recognition and loyalty. From the interviews, it was clear to see that those teams and athletes that presented as being relatable, fair and as role models were a much more appealing candidate to those offering the sponsorships (see Table 4.2). It is through these qualities that the athlete's image is formed. As part of a sponsorship agreement, the sponsor aligns themselves with the team or athlete that they deem to be the most suitable match with their brand. A greater perception of fit often leads to correct sponsor identification, and more favourable emotions towards the sponsor (Roy & Cornwell, 2004). When making a sponsorship selection, ensuring that their brand is seen to be appropriately aligned with a team or athlete that has similar morals and standards is crucial to ensure longevity and success. If a sponsorship fit is considered to be mis-aligned, lasting negative effects to the brand's reputation can occur. Thus, when sponsors are making a sponsorship selection, the team or athlete's image needs to be taken into account to ensure the fit is appropriate.

Table 4.2 *Support for sub-theme image.*

Supporting Quotes	Participant
Because the Tactix have been unsuccessful performance wise, they have had to rely on their image and personal skills to attract and maintain sponsorships.	Informant 8 (Female)
It is very important to sponsors that they are aligned to strong and positive role models	Informant 8 (Female)
You want brand profile and if the team or athlete that you're sponsoring has a profile it gives your brand the opportunity to be seen to better and sponsorship's clearly a good way of doing that.	Informant 4 (Female)
It's more about how they fit with our business.	Informant 3 (Male)
It's easy for teams to take money from sponsorships but I think you've got to work out whether or not the sponsors' name fits with the team's values and vice versa.	Informant 5 (Male)
Yes you play, yes you look good but you still need to go out and do that and be out in the community and be there and that was really important.	Informant 8 (Female)
I think if a team presents themselves well they'll be appealing to sponsors.	Informant 4 (Female)

4.4 Influence of Gender

It was noted that interviewees appeared to be influenced by gender both on a conscious and more subconscious level throughout the in-depth interviews. It appeared that the number of sponsors that male-dominant teams had outweighed those of female-dominant teams. The amount of financial support women's sport has received compared to men's sport has long been an issue, as discussed in previous chapters.

When referring to successful teams or athletes, every interviewee that was asked to give an example provided one that was either a men's team or male athlete. No successful female athletes or teams were mentioned or used as examples throughout the duration of all in-depth interviews. Female athletes were always compared to their male counterparts when talking about success, sponsorship and the influence of gender. All those interviewed that were associated with netball believed that sponsorship was influenced by gender. However, the majority of those interviewed that were associated with rugby believed that gender was not and has never been a factor in regard to sponsorship opportunities. Those that expressed this opinion often became defensive when questioned about gender and would be very quick in answering any questions. Those participants associated with rugby that shared this opinion became agitated and appeared frustrated when probed for more detail regarding their opinion on the influence of gender. As they were associated with male-dominant teams, they appeared to feel as though this should no longer be an issue and seemed aggravated by the fact this topic was discussed.

Upon completion of the association exercise, those representing netball identified symbols or pictures representing unity. Examples include the colour red, holding hands, standing in a circle and groups of people. Whereas those representing rugby identified more masculine images of success and notoriety. The colours red and black are associated with unity and 'togetherness' as they are the colours that represent the region of Canterbury. As this thesis focuses on Canterbury regional sports teams, the colour red was a frequently recognised colour by participants. Examples include darker colours and trophies. As discussed in the following subthemes, the influence of gender appears to be present when influencing a sponsor's decision-making process. The identified subthemes are discussed in the following sections: media exposure, stereotypes and followers.

4.4.1 Media Exposure

Throughout the interview, many references were made to the differing levels of media coverage and exposure between men's and women's sport. Men's sport appears to receive a large proportion of media coverage compared to that of women's, not only for netball and rugby but also other sports. Due to the smaller amounts of coverage women's sport receives, creating awareness and publicity becomes more of a challenge. Sponsors are, therefore, more inclined to invest in a team with larger amount of publicity and presence on these platforms rather than those struggling for attention. Whilst there has been a recent improvement in

women's sports coverage, it is still far from equal to men's sports coverage. An example of this was that netball is now shown live on television, however replays are not aired. In comparison, rugby has for a long time been shown on television, with replays of the game shown at a later time or date. 'The old boys' network' was a term used in multiple in-depth interviews, referring to those responsible for organising media coverage having an invested interest in men's sport. This emphasises how difficult it is for women to break the mould and receive as much publicity as men, when they are met with external challenges regarding media coverage. Media exposure between the varying sports remains vastly different, shown in table 4.3.

Table 4.3 *Support for sub-theme media exposure.*

Supporting Text Units	Reference
Men's sport is so dominant, it gets the line share of advertising as well as the lines of viewing on any of the media and TV platforms whereas women's doesn't.	Informant 8 (Female)
The people that run the media networks in our country and they have an invested interest in their own interest. I think that the old boys network is absolutely alive and kicking.	Informant 8 (Female)
Silver Ferns aren't an international brand and have limited media exposure.	Informant 1 (Male)
Male sport gets more coverage than women's sport, television and media coverage is important for a sponsor.	Informant 5 (Male)
We've been stifled by the lack of media opportunities.	Informant 8 (Female)
A year long study for an entire year taped or watched the news and there was something like 5% of the entire year's worth of work on women's sport and the rest covering men's.	Informant 8 (Female)

4.4.2 Capabilities

As well as media coverage, an increasing number of men's teams are fortunate enough to be associated with professional support systems both internally and externally, enabling and further promoting that particular athlete and team. Due to more limited media exposure, women's sport lacks resources and capabilities to promote their sport and name to sponsors. Contrasting this, male athletes and teams often have assigned teams and individuals working with and alongside them to promote and both attain and retain sponsors. An example of this was the Crusaders. To ensure they engage with the correct amount of sponsorships and have the ideal number of sponsors, individuals are employed to manage relationships and resources. This is a form of internal support, one that the Crusaders have the resources to implement to better manage and strategically position their brand to sponsors. Women's teams such as the Tactix, to date, have lacked those same resources and players are forced to engage in seeking sponsorship on their own rather than having a manager responsible for this aspect of their marketing. These differing capability levels are shown in table 4.4.

Table 4.4 *Support for sub-theme capabilities.*

Quotes	Informant
We've got a commercial team that is focused on selling sponsorship.	Informant 3 (Male)
Honesty you've probably got a guy in our business who's been doing sponsorship for a long time so he's a really key factor. So I think um the commercial model that's delivered here is delivered by one guy and lead by one guy, so I think that's probably an important part of the success of the Crusaders.	Informant 3 (Male)
I mean each of our sponsors has an account manager and they're obviously talking to the sponsors every day or every month to make sure that they're achieving what they need to achieve.	Informant 3 (Male)

There was one year where there was a commission based marketing manager um so she if she got a sponsorship she would get a cut kind of thing. Um that worked pretty well because she was very good at publicity and a very personable person and she was great at looking after the sponsors and knowing how to treat them like absolute kings and queens when she saw them. Um so that was yeah she actively sourced sponsorship and that was her role.	Informant 8 (Female)
Relationship building with the public, the girls were seen a lot because it was really important to the community and to female sport.	Informant 8 (Female)

4.4.3 Number of Followers

The number of followers was addressed through the interviews as being an issue for women's sports. As previously mentioned, awareness and number of followers is a contributing factor for sponsorship selection. It is through media exposure and publicity that men's teams often have a larger following than women's teams. Interviewees referenced the minimal number of followers that a women's sport has and how this was, and continues to be, a major challenge that women's sport needs to overcome in order to attract sponsors. As the number of followers that a sport has is a reflection of their success and a brand's target market =, a larger following meant more of the brand's target market could be reached at one point in time. Thus, it was a more effective and viable option to sponsor a men's team over a women's based on following, as illustrated in table 4.5.

Table 4.5 *Support for sub-theme number of followers.*

Supporting Text Units	Reference
If you're a New Zealand company and you want to get a lot of brand presence then you're obviously going to pay way more for	Informant 2 (Male)

the All Blacks because of the number of people that follow it.	
Silver Ferns who have a really small arena you know 5,000 or 6,000 or 10,000 versus 47,000 at Eden Park for the All Blacks.	Informant 3 (Male)
It's about audience, all about audience.	Informant 2 (Male)
Silver Ferns aren't an international brand, they don't have the following that it needs.	Informant 2 (Male)
It's not about the athlete or the team but it's about who follows that athlete and who follows that team.	Informant 2 (Male)

4.5. Successful Sponsorships

Successful sponsorships are subjective and are determined by the combination of a range of influencing factors. Interviewees in the in-depth interviews emphasised the need for transparency between all parties, as well as honesty and trust. As previously discussed, sponsorships are the combination of skills and resources to produce a mutually beneficial outcome for both parties involved. The length of a sponsorship can be determined by whether or not it was considered successful, with unprofitable or unsuccessful sponsorships being terminated prior to the agreed completion date. Successful sponsorships have agreed terms and conditions prior to the arrangement commencing, often with measurable outcomes to monitor whether or not the sponsorship was successful. The following subthemes were identified from the interviews which are considered to be contributing factors to successful sponsorships: brand awareness, KPIs, revenue generating and the relationship.

4.5.1 Brand Awareness

Interviewees described brand awareness as the amount of exposure or publicity a team or athlete can achieve for the sponsoring brand. Reasons for a brand entering into a sponsorship agreement can vary hugely but the most common reason was to promote that brand and create brand awareness. This can be achieved on a local, national or international scale for those sponsoring more well-known teams that have a greater following. As discussed in the interviews, sponsorship is a means of advertising and one that is increasing in popularity. As brands compete for customers and clients on a daily basis, they are beginning to compete for

teams or athletes that they believe can bring their business the most value, exposure and brand awareness, as evidenced through the supporting quotes in table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6 *Support for sub-theme brand awareness.*

Supporting Text Units	Reference
So there are companies that do that for the visibility of the brand.	Female 4 (Female)
So in Super Rugby, to be seen in a global audience is a really big driver for people.	Female 6 (Female)
A key objective for some sponsors at games is to have that global audience seeing that brand. So it's a subconscious thing isn't it, of delving into that marketing side of branding.	Informant 6 (Female)
Certain amount of exposure, brand awareness, surveys, something that adds value to the brand.	Informant 3 (Male)
So a sponsorship for an individual athlete or a team, is more about the reach that that athlete can have to their customers.	Informant 2 (Male)

4.5.2 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Key performance indicators (KPIs) were a frequently discussed topic within the in-depth interviews. Most interviewees stated that KPIs are established for each sponsorship arrangement with varying levels of intensity and requirements. It was noted that KPIs are one of the most effective ways to monitor whether or not a sponsorship was successful. KPIs clearly detail the expectations of each party and form a contract-like document of deliverables which are met over the course of the sponsorship; they provide a measurable way of ensuring success. Depending on who the sponsor is and who the team is that they are sponsoring, deliverables are unique. Examples that interviewees gave included wearing sponsor's clothing, driving marked cars, attending sponsor events, social media posts and photo-shoots. From this subtheme, numerous interviewees expressed the importance of having KPIs and ensuring that expectations and agreements are met throughout the duration

of the relationship, shown through the supporting text units in table 4.7.

Table 4.7 *Support for sub-theme KPIs.*

Supporting Text Units	Reference
It's making sure that you've got those deliverables contracted, that you've got them written down and then it's measuring those deliverables against the outcomes.	Informant 6 (Female)
So they're all really measurable, so my part is just taking the stuff that's delivered at a game and making sure that we follow through on that.	Informant 6 (Female)
I think it's having transparent KPIs, so when the companies come on board to sponsor an organisation, that organisation is very aware of what they're wanting to achieve out of it.	Informant 5 (Male)
It's pretty much about what the KPIs they're wanting to achieve so there's a real focus and the sponsored organisation work in tandem and partnership to help achieve them.	Informant 2 (Male)
So most of the sponsorships I've been involved with have had KPIs, they had the things that are important to both parties in the contract.	Informant 1 (Male)

4.5.3 Revenue

Another factor that determines the success of a sponsorship is whether or not it generates revenue for the brand. Much like KPIs, this has a measurable outcome and can be easily tracked and monitored throughout the arrangement. As sponsorship is a method of advertising, an end goal for sponsors is to ultimately generate revenue through the accumulation of their client base and target market. As sponsorships are a partnership, the

sponsee can be paid for their promotional services. Sponsors then need to establish whether or not the sponsorship is a financially viable option. As shown by the following supporting quotes related to revenue in table 4.8, interviewees were aware of the financial commitment and importance of sponsorships.

Table 4.8. *Support for sub-theme revenue.*

Supporting Text Units	Reference
In the past it was a lot more about the feel good factor but today money's harder so I think sponsors are looking for a return on their investment.	Informant 5 (Male)
So I think it's the money. The more money you have, the more resources you have and the more capability you have to go and get sponsors and the better calibre of people you have.	Informant 6 (Female)
I just purely think it's down to figures.	Informant 6 (Female)
If it's a commercial sponsorship, a company's deciding to sponsor to advance their return on investment.	Informant 2 (Male)

4.5.4 Relationship

During the in-depth interviews, there were many instances where it was noted that the relationship between the two parties determined the success of a sponsorship. Interviewees indicated that an element of trust and transparency needed to be shared in order for success. A sponsorship relationship was also determined by the fit of the two parties. Whether or not the target market perceives the fit to be appropriate can contribute to whether or not the sponsorship is supported. It was also noted that a successful sponsorship must involve more than the revenue or publicity it generates, but also goodwill. Through the supporting quotes in table 4.9, it is apparent that the agreement is more than just a contract but instead a partnership.

Table 4.9. *Support for sub-theme relationship.*

Supporting Text Units	Reference
Sponsors want to be treated well and with respect so how they get treated determines how successful the sponsorship is.	Informant 2 (Male)
There are a number of factors here but I can't stress enough relationship, relationship, relationship! In the range of sectors I have worked in everything comes down to relationship and a reciprocal relationship at that.	Informant 8 (Female)
Having an open and transparent relationship between the sponsor and sponsee is critical to their success.	Informant 7 (Male)
There's a real focus on working in tandem and partnership to help achieve.	Informant 3 (Male)
I think it's maintaining that relationship.	Informant 4 (Female)

4.6 Chapter Summary

The findings discussed in this chapter highlight the three major themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews: sponsorship selection, influence of gender and successful sponsorships. All three themes were identified as influencing the decision making of sponsors.

Sponsorship selection is made up of four elements: success, mutual benefit, fan following and image. Together, these four aspects combine to be significantly influential on the decision-making process of a sponsor. Influence of gender consist of three subthemes: exposure, capabilities and number of followers. Together, these discuss how and why sponsorships are influenced by gender and the impact of such barriers. Finally, successful sponsorships consist of four subthemes: brand awareness, KPIs, revenue and relationship. A sponsorship's success is dependent on those four aspects and each party's commitment to the sponsorship agreement.

From the three themes and relevant subthemes discussed above, we see three aspects that are common in sponsorship decision making. All themes (sponsorship selection, influence of gender and sponsorship success) are factors when delving into the perceptual barriers experienced by sponsors when in the decision-making process.

Chapter Five - Discussion & Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The following section addresses the findings; discussing them in depth as well as addressing how each research question was appropriately answered. This thesis concurs with previous literature and findings from both Gross & Wiedmann (2015) and Dolphin (2003), in regard to the significance of establishing brand awareness, loyalty and the perceived fit of a sponsorship agreement (see Table 2.1).

As discussed in the literature review, the nature of sponsorships differs greatly depending on the sport, sponsor and agreement. However, from these findings, successful sponsorships, in most cases, strengthen brand associations for the target market whilst improving CSR for the sponsor (Uhrich, Koenigstorfer & Groeppel-Klein, 2013). These findings also discussed the influence of gender on the sponsor's decision-making process, identifying that gender does in fact have an influence on the selection of sponsees in the New Zealand sports industry.

These findings are of significance as they help sponsees recognise and understand what sponsors look for in potential opportunities. It provides teams or athletes with relevant knowledge surrounding how to attract sponsors; improving the likelihood of being sponsored (see section 5.3). As sponsorship is seen as an effective marketing tool, one that is drastically increasing in popularity, sponsors need to extend their boundaries for who they offer sponsorships too. This would, in turn, allow for more New Zealand teams and athletes to progress and develop their sporting endeavors, and allow for more international competition.

5.2 Interpretation & Discussion of Findings

The literature review section of this thesis provides an in-depth analysis of sports sponsorship, associated benefits of sponsorship and gender in sport. This review brought together the literature surrounding sports sponsorship and showed why it is such an effective and internationally recognised tool within marketing. The literature identified that brand awareness, loyalty and brand image are key benefits of sponsorship. The findings of this research align with this literature, finding similar results. As identified by Cornwell & Maignan (1998), sponsorship is a tool that enables sponsors and brands to target particular markets and consumers. This was also discussed within the in-depth interviews and

something that participants involved in sponsorship found very beneficial. As sponsorship can be seen as an act of goodwill, it can promote positive brand associations for consumers, as identified by Gwinner & Bennett (2008). Thus, it prompts brand loyalty and image enhancement amongst consumers, of which are benefits discussed in Table 2.1.

The number of followers a sponsee had was identified as being a factor that sponsors take into consideration, however this was not something that was heavily discussed in the literature.

The influence of gender on sponsorship decision making was relatively untouched in previous research. Thus, these findings fulfil that gap in literature and show that in fact gender does have an influence on the sponsor's decision making.

5.2.1 Key Findings for Research Objective One: Factors to Successful Sports Sponsorships

Research objective one attempted to discover the key factors to a successful sports sponsorship. One of the factors for a successful sponsorship, as previously mentioned, is ensuring that those chosen for the sponsorship are going to increase brand awareness and credibility for the sponsoring entity (Thjomoe, Mathias, Olson and Bronn, 2002).

When researching successful sponsorships, three main themes emerged from the in-depth interviews. Those being, the correct alignment between the sponsorship and marketing strategy, ensuring an appropriate fit between the sponsors and sponsees and mutual benefits (see Findings 4.6). Ensuring that the sponsorship aligns with the marketing strategy of the brand is crucial when establishing a successful sponsorship. The sponsor will only enter into a sponsorship if this form of advertising and marketing aligns with their values and morals as a company/organisation. They must have sufficient resources, both time and money, to invest to ensure they can provide enough funding for the sponsee.

Determining whether or not to enter into a sponsorship can also be reliant on who the sponsor is interested in sponsoring. If a sponsor decides that offering a sponsorship is a part of the brand's marketing strategy, then finding an athlete or team also wanting to enter into a sponsorship can be challenging. Thus, leading onto the second factor of successful sports sponsorships: determining an appropriate fit between the sponsor and sponsee. Having an

appropriate fit can enhance the image of the sponsor (Shaw & Amis, 2001). With Woisetschlager, Eiting, Haselhoff & Michaelis (2009) also agreeing that a successful sponsorship is formed on the consumer's opinion on the sponsorship fit.

Grohs & Reisinger (2014) also identified in their research that, having a high perceived fit benefits the sponsor's image. A sponsor's image and how they present themselves to their chosen target market is crucial for success and creating brand equity. As such, establishing a high perceived fit between them and the sponsored entity will likely increase their brand equity. As Roy & Cornwell (2004) stated in their research, "*building brand equity is imperative*". Consumers are more inclined to support and be interested in a sponsorship that they deem relevant and appropriate, rather than one that seems inappropriate.

It was evident through the in-depth interviews that if the fit is deemed appropriate by both parties, this forms the foundation for a trusting and transparent relationship. Successful sponsorships are built on trust. Despite a stable relationship, sponsors must be wary of their expectations of their sponsees. Fovorito (2013) discussed in their research that whilst new sponsors often try and gain publicity and attention, they must remember that they too are not publicity professionals. Therefore, building relationships with these groups and making the target audience a part of the process is more beneficial (Fovorito, 2013). Ensuring that sponsees feel a part of the goal rather than simply a means for publicity also assists when establishing an appropriate fit.

This research finds sufficient evidence emphasising the importance of the perceived fit in sponsorship selection. As explained in the analysis, informants are in agreement with the literature.

The third factor that was a reoccurring theme throughout the findings was the idea of mutual benefits for both parties. According to Nufer & Buhler (2009), "*sports sponsorship is an important source of income for professional sporting organisations and an effective marketing tool for companies. Both sponsorship partners have to work hand in hand to make the sponsorship a success*". Ensuring that both the sponsee as well as the sponsor have equal benefits promotes a positive relationship between the two entities and increases the likelihood of sponsorship longevity. The age or maturity of the sponsorship also influences marketing

results (Lough & Irwin, 2001). Many of the respondents discussed the importance of mutual benefits as the foundation for a successful and professional relationship. Athletes and teams need the financial support to pursue their endeavors which the sponsor can provide, whilst the sponsor is entering the arrangement for a whole host of varying reasons including brand awareness, credibility and goodwill. The success of the arrangement can be measured by varying means of measurement.

From the findings of this research objective, it has been identified that alignment with marketing objectives, mutual benefit and appropriate fit are key factors to sports sponsorship success. From consistency across the informant responses as well as the literature previously discussed, the above three factors contribute to the success of sports sponsorships in the New Zealand sports industry. As Lee & Ross (2012) identified in their research, and as previously discussed in the literature review (see Sponsorship Fit), mutually beneficial activities help to create networks and form solid relationships between the sponsor and sponsee.

If a sponsorship were to lack the above three factors, the success and longevity of the relationship could be compromised. Therefore, the practical implications for New Zealand sports stakeholders would be to ensure that when commencing a sponsorship agreement between a sponsor and sponsee, morals, objectives and goals are in alignment. Each party is aware of their responsibilities and expectations prior to commencing the agreement, whilst remaining trustworthy throughout the entire relationship. By ensuring this, sponsorships may become an even more popular choice for marketers within the sports industry. As shown in the literature review, the advantages of implementing this marketing tool within the New Zealand sports industry far outweigh the disadvantages.

Whilst most of the findings concurred with previous literature, there were some areas of literature that were not found in this research. One being that sponsorship enhances the possibility of cultural and language barriers being broken in global markets (Lee & Ross, 2012). This is due to the confined context of New Zealand in this study. However, overcoming cultural and language barriers may be considered as potential benefits of international brands sponsoring women's sports in New Zealand. International brands and sponsors should seek women's teams and athletes in New Zealand that are currently lacking opportunities. This would not only create brand awareness but also dramatically increase their target market, strategically position themselves in a new and developing market, and

enhance their corporate image. These have all been identified as beneficial aspects to sports sponsorship. Another is the improvement of CSR, goodwill and brand image (Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006).

5.2.2 Key Findings of Research Objective Two: Factors that Influence Sponsorship Decision Making

Research objective two discussed, in the eyes of a sponsor, what made an athlete or team appealing to sponsor. The major themes associated with this question were the players level of success, number of followers and similarly matched morals to the brand. In the analysis, it was noted that brands strive to associate themselves with successful teams (see Findings 4.3.1). The literature review also discusses that sponsors can be influenced by the sponsees fan following. If the team/athlete have a direct relationship to the brand's target market, creating a relationship between them and the brand would present as advantageous for both parties (Hughes & Shank, 2005). As discussed in the literature. Lough and Irwin (2001) identified the size of the target audience and market share that is following the team or athlete is appealing to a sponsor. Informants responses concur with this idea presented through the literature (see Analysis 4.3.3).

The three major themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews were obvious as to whether or not a sponsor was willing to offer a sponsorship (see Analysis 4.3). Based on the data analysis, it was apparent that if a player had most of the attributes listed above, a sponsorship would more likely be offered. However, if the team/athlete was moderately successful and had a small following, then they would be disregarded as only a potential candidate for sponsorship. It was noted that success can be challenging to measure as it is dependent on who is reviewing the team or athlete and can vary hugely. In this case, success was defined as competing at a professional level for New Zealand.

Sponsoring brands sought to find the most appropriately matched candidate for their proposition. Success and number of followers goes hand in hand. Informant 7 stated that "success is how a lot of companies determine where they sponsor". According to Walliser (2003), "increasing awareness for brands and companies have traditionally been the most important sponsorship objectives". The more successful a team, the more recognition, media attention and publicity they are going to receive. Thus, their number of fans and followers

often increases with success through awareness. Lee and Ross (2012) state that “brand awareness is undoubtedly important because brand awareness generates positive attitudes toward a sponsor’s products or brands”. It is through this increase of media attention that brands and sponsors are notified of the rising success of the athlete/team and attempt to associate themselves with the success by forming a partnership and establishing a relationship. As sponsors are involved to often promote their business or product, they want to be associated with success, in the hope that the success from the athlete is spread to the product.

The more followers an athlete/team has, the more exposure the brand is going to receive and vice versa. In order for a brand to fully maximise their sponsorship, they need to obtain the return on investment they want to achieve, that often being exposure and awareness. The findings of this research signify that success plays a role in the sponsorship decision-making process. There is no doubt that sponsoring a successful team is beneficial. Bauer, Sauer & Schmitt (2005) identified that both athletic success and brand equity had a significantly positive effect on revenue. It is of no surprise, and confirmed by respondents, that being associated with a successful team or athlete, and one that performs, is beneficial and attracts consumers to both support the team or athlete and brand.

Consumers often connect on an emotional level with a successful athlete as they provide inspiration and motivation. Psychological and emotional engagement is crucial for consumers (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Thus, if a successful athlete/team was to associate themselves with a brand, it would have a more persuasive effect on the followers. Rifon, Choi, Trimble & Li (2004) identified in their research that source credibility often enhances the persuasive effects of those used to endorse the product. Crompton (1996) states that “a company’s relationship with most of its audiences is usually rather distant and sponsorship enables a target market to be approached through activities”. Informants concurred with this piece of literature in that sponsorship is used a vehicle to guide sponsors to their chosen target market. This is done in an attempt to strength the connection between the brand, sponsee and consumers. Thus, the findings from the research concur with literature in that establishing brand loyalty and a level of commitment for fans proves beneficial for sponsors. In regard to the New Zealand sports industry, sponsors need to carefully select a target market and, in turn, select candidates to sponsor that they believe would fit with their target audience. By doing this, the sponsor will

gain a larger target market and brand awareness in an attempt to establish brand loyalty and commitment.

Through the association exercise carried out in the in-depth interviews, respondents showed that success is appealing, even if not verbally expressed (see Analysis 4.3.1.). As discussed, when respondents in this study were asked to circle and or identify images that represented their respective teams (in this case either netball or rugby), “team success” appeared as a common image. Examples included a trophy, people celebrating, podiums or medals.

It is clear that success, number of followers, and aligned values and morals are significant determinants for sponsors when in the decision-making process. These findings can be of use to athletes and teams who may be looking for sponsorships, as they are now more aware of necessary attributes for sponsorship selection. In terms of the New Zealand sports industry, these findings allow for a more diverse range of teams and athletes being offered sponsorships. Some examples include an equal amount of male and female dominant sports teams and athletes, niche sports and para-athletes and teams. Ensuring that there is an equal share of male and female teams being offered sponsorships helps New Zealand athletes to compete on an international level.

5.2.3 Key Findings of Research Objective Three: Influence of Gender on Sponsorship in Sport

Research objective three addressed whether or not gender has an influence on sponsors and their relevant sponsorship decisions. Currently, minimal research exists on the impact of gender on sponsors and their decision making. Therefore, this particular research question will address new findings in this field of research.

Female athletes and teams feel disadvantaged and compromised when looking for sponsorship ventures. A current example of this (as discussed in section “Gender Bias in Sport”) is that 40% of women are experiencing gender discrimination in their chosen sports industry (Barr, 2018). In comparison, male athletes and teams are presented with more benefits, support and sponsorship opportunities, regardless of their success as a team or individual. Throughout the history of sport there has been a disparity in earnings for each gender which remains in existence. However, female athletes or teams need to work much harder and be consistently successful to attract sponsors and sponsorships. Not only do

females struggle with sponsorships, they are also confined with publicity and media attention in comparison to their male counterparts. Both Sherwood (2017) and Ridinger (2006) concur with the idea that women's sport struggles to attract media attention and thus have minimal coverage compared to their male counterparts.

Those respondents associated with the sport of netball were adamant that their teams and sport were compromised because of gender and provided many examples in their interviews. Examples include Informant 8 stating, "*in my experience, sponsorship is definitely influenced by gender*". In comparison, those associated with the sport of rugby were convinced that gender did not play a part yet could not provide any examples of this not being the case. Those respondents that held this view became noticeably anxious and uneasy when asked about gender in sport and became defensive and non-responsive.

From the interviews, it appears that female athletes and teams are stifled by the lack of opportunities regarding sponsorship because of the preconceived ideas surrounding gender. In regard to the New Zealand sports industry, sponsors need to become more aware of female athletes and teams that are competing at a high performing level and in desperate need of sponsorship. Women athletes are struggling to make ends meet due to demanding costs of competing, thus creating awareness around them as players and teams would attract sponsors. As awareness surrounding women's sport is beginning to increase, sponsors can now see the benefits to being associated with up-and-coming teams; in turn, presenting as viable and profitable sponsorship options. A recent example includes the New Zealand women's rugby team recently signing a "*historic sponsorship deal with Molenberg*", with "*the partnership being the first of its kind*" (Friend, 2018). Thus, lessening the gap between the two gender's in regard to sponsorship funding, creating a more equal and fair industry.

5.3 Importance of Findings

The findings for this thesis concur with past literature, as well as present a new area of research regarding the influence of gender on the sponsor's decision-making process. As discussed in the literature review and referenced by Gardner & Shuman (1987), the findings align with the idea that sponsorship promotes brand loyalty for the relevant stakeholders. The findings show consistencies with other literature in that sponsorship helps to improve a brand's image and brand associations (Gross & Wiedmann, 2015; Lough & Irwin, 2001).

Lough & Irwin (2001) also identified in their research the significance of brand awareness and exposure; ideas that coincide with these findings. Building market share and a fan following was another aspect of this thesis that was consistent with previous literature. Gwinner & Bennett (2008) and Dolphin (2003) both highlighted in their research the need to gain affinity with target audiences, similar to the findings of this research.

Teams or athletes looking for sponsorship should find these findings both informative and beneficial. These findings present a collection of factors that sponsors often look for in a sponsee and what is considered to be important in the sponsorship agreement. These factors, discussed in the conclusion, should be taken into careful consideration by teams or athletes as it provides them with knowledge surrounding how to attract sponsors and features that teams can offer sponsors to enhance their position amongst competitors.

The sponsorship gap between male and female athletes remains inexistence. Sponsors need to be more inclusive and aware of varying sports, genders and abilities to lessen this identified bias. In turn, New Zealand teams will more likely be able to compete at international levels due to having sufficient funding and support to achieve their ambitions.

The benefits from a sponsor becoming involved in sponsorship are countless. Greenhalgh and Greenwell (2013) identified that the implementation of sponsorship stimulates consumer involvement and, as a result, brand loyalty. Other benefits of being involved in the sponsorship of New Zealand women's sports teams, as identified by Simmons & Becker-Olsen (2006), include the improvement of CSR, goodwill and brand image. If sponsors are seen to be supporting the community and those struggling for opportunities in the New Zealand sports industry, rather than teams inundated with sponsorships, helps to stimulate social capital and strengthens the consumer's perception of the brand. Thus, becoming involved in either female sports or lesser known teams would improve goodwill, facilitate positive brand associations and help to build social capital for the sponsor (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Dolphin, 2003; Gwinner & Bennett, 2008).

As discussed in the literature review (see section 1.11), there are many examples of female teams and athletes experiencing bias in the sports industry; the findings demonstrating that those biases still exist through the interviewees discussions and responses. The influence of

gender on sponsorship decision making has been discussed throughout this thesis. It was noted that these biases exist not only in the conscious level of thinking, but also the subconscious. The association exercise revealed the influence of gender to often be more of a deciding factor that the respondent would verbally acknowledge. Thus, highlighting the significant role that gender plays on the decision-making process in the New Zealand sports industry.

Whilst sponsorship has been a widely-researched topic in the past, the influence of gender on the decision-making process has not been looked at in depth. This area of research widens the door for further research in this field. It enables sponsors, teams or individual athletes to improve their knowledge and understanding of what is looked for and how to improve their position within the New Zealand sports industry. As some sponsors appear more prone to gender bias, upon completion of this research, teams and athletes are better able to position themselves in a market, targeting those sponsors that are inclusive of all genders.

To summarise, these findings are of importance to sponsors, teams or athletes as they explain what sponsors look for when entering into a sponsorship agreement.

5.4 Academic Contribution

The research conducted for this thesis provides contributions of an academic nature to the following area of research: sponsorship selection and the influence of gender on sports sponsorships. The literature review has discussed the identified gap for this area of research (see section Gap in Literature). The following section will explain how this thesis has filled this gap in literature.

On top of previous literature, this study concurs with ideas surrounding the importance of increasing brand awareness and market share (Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2013). The findings support this area of prior research with the provision of new examples from participants in relation to netball and rugby. This research concurs with Greenhalgh & Greenwell (2013), as well as identifying the significance of fit between the sponsor and sponsee, mutual benefit and cohesion with the overall marketing strategy. The findings concur with Simmons & Becker-Olsen (2006) in that fit impacts the target market's perception of the sponsorship and must be deemed appropriate. The perceived fit was discussed previously in the literature

review, with the findings concurring with previous academic contributions made by researchers. Presenting fit, brand awareness and mutual benefit as interacting concepts for factors of successful sponsorships is also an academic contribution to literature.

This thesis has further contributed to academia through the provision of insight and knowledge surrounding the influence of gender in sports sponsorships. The findings of this study have added to the body of knowledge surrounding the factors that influence the sponsors decision making, as well as factors they deem significant when making their selection. Specifically, this research focused on rugby and netball at a regional level within New Zealand and the significantly varying levels of sponsorship each sport is currently involved with. Whilst this research focused predominantly on two sports, it can be applied at an international level to all sports.

The idea of gender bias in sport has been researched prior, however not in relation to sponsors and the associated decision-making process. Through this research, it was uncovered that gender does in fact influence the sponsor in regard to their decision making.

Overall, this research provides empirical evidence from New Zealand with specific contextual implications. Teams, athletes and sponsors can use the information to better understand the decision-making process, factors that influence a successful sponsorship and the role of gender.

5.5 Managerial Implications

These findings have managerial implications for the New Zealand sports industry, in particular for sponsors and athletes and or teams looking for sponsorship. These findings discuss the influence of gender on sponsorship decision making, the factors to successful sports sponsorships and factors that influence decision making (see sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3). For instance, the findings can assist sponsees in understanding the factors and qualities that sponsors look for when determining which sponsee candidates to sponsor. Whilst not all may be applicable to that particular athlete or team, having an awareness surrounding the decision-making process is beneficial. As discussed in the findings, mutual benefit and the relationship between the sponsor and sponsee is crucial for a successful sponsorship. Thus, knowing what each party expects and are looking for in their counterpart

would help to create a trustworthy, open and honest business relationship (see section 4.3.2).

In terms of sponsors, identifying that sponsorship opportunities have been favoured to male athletes and teams is useful information. As sponsorship increases as a marketing tool, seeing equal opportunities in regard to sponsorships with female teams would prove beneficial. Sponsors need to broaden their horizons in regard to who they offer sponsorships too. As Shaw and Amis (2001) identified in their research, to date, sponsors have been influenced by people in positions of power. By breaking the mould and sponsoring more female athletes and teams, creating that goodwill and social capital as previously discussed, will help establish the foundations for a successful sponsorship opportunity. An example being the New Zealand women's rugby team receiving their first sponsorship in 2018, after having won a national title and being nationally recognised. Through these findings, sponsors should gain an awareness surrounding how female teams and athletes have been stifled by a lack of opportunities in the past; now they have the opportunity to become involved and reduce the gender bias that currently remains in existence within the New Zealand sports industry.

5.6 Limitations

While this research has drawn on findings that have added to the body of knowledge regarding the influence of gender on sports sponsorship, some potential limitations have been identified and are discussed accordingly.

The first limitation relates to the sensitivity of the studied topic. The nature of this topic (gender) is highly discussed and an often personal and sensitive issue. As a result, boundaries surrounding the types of questions that were asked in the in-depth interviews were formed. This proved to be a complex concept and one that has challenging boundaries to define.

Whilst discussing the topic of gender can be the cause of uncertainty and in some cases animosity, the researcher needed to be particularly careful when addressing this question. Thus, it was difficult when discussing this topic with respondents, particularly as it had not been previously addressed in this context before. To mitigate the sensitivity of such questions, respondents were aware prior to commencing the interviews that should they feel uncomfortable at any point, responses to questions were voluntary not compulsory.

Secondly, the interviewer was aware of what each respondent's profession was, for example, coach, player or management. As a result, respondents may have felt pressured as to how much information they were able to disclose without compromising their own professional position. For example, it may be in a player's contract to not disclose any information regarding their contract or sponsorship agreement. In some cases, respondents did state that they could not or were not prepared to disclose some information, due to confidentiality agreements. Despite this limitation, all respondents were informed by the interviewer on several occasions that if they did not feel comfortable answering a question or discussing a topic, they were by no means forced to. Whilst this was identified as a limitation to the research, respondents seemed interested in the research and were in most cases obliging when giving personal examples.

Some methodological limitations have been identified from this study and discussed below. Firstly, only two sports were included in the study; those being rugby and netball. Whilst there was a variety of both athletes and those involved with management interviewed, this study cannot be applicable to all sports. Despite the fact that it does provide justification and evidence about gender in both rugby and netball, further study involving other sports may be necessary to prove this is not a limited case.

Lastly, a methodological limitation of this research was the decision to implement in-depth interviews as the main method for data collection. By using in-depth interviews, the interviewer may have led the responses of the interviewees. As discussed prior (Chapter 3.3.2), proving and leading responses is consistent with the methodology of constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1985) and a way to gain more in-depth and subconscious views from the interviewees. To combat this limitation, interviewees were asked to complete the association exercise, in which they were left to their own devices with no input from the interviewer. Therefore, although the use of in-depth interviews could have caused biased information, these limitations were minimised.

5.7 Directions for Future Research

As stated over the course of this thesis, there is currently no studies on the influence of gender on the sponsor's decision-making process. As a result, there is a wide range of avenues that could be taken to further this area of research.

As this research contributed research surrounding the influence of gender on sports sponsorship, an area for future research would be investigating other gender biases within the sports industry. As this research focused predominantly on sponsorship, understanding whether or not gender has the same influence on other areas of the sports industry would be beneficial. This research has identified that gender has an influence on a sponsor's decision-making process. However, obtaining insight and findings into other areas of gender bias within sport would be a powerful discovery. In order to fully comprehend the influence of gender, research should be undertaken to see exactly where gender bias is experienced. In order to completely combat the issue and establish equality amongst sports teams and athletes, further research is suggested.

Following on from this study, further research could also be undertaken in the field of how sponsors choose the most appropriate team or athlete to sponsor. This was a question that the researcher presented to respondents, however failed to yield any notable responses.

Understanding how the selection process is carried out and what criteria is followed (if any), would benefit teams and athletes looking for sponsorship opportunities. It would ease the selection process for those looking for sponsorship and reduce any ambiguity surrounding exactly what a sponsor is looking in a sponsee. If this process was better understood and proven, athletes and teams would then be more aware of what sponsors are looking for in sponsees and ways in which to meet their needs. Thus, increasing their likelihood of being granted a sponsorship. As this area of research much like gender in that sponsorship is relatively untouched, it therefore presents as being a worthwhile avenue for future study.

5.8 Conclusion

The analysis and conclusions of this research is in agreement with previous sponsorship research. This study has outlined that brand awareness, number of followers, mutual benefit and perceived fit are all factors to ensure a successful sponsorship. Conceptually, this research has synthesised previous sports sponsorship literature, from both a sponsor's and sponsee's perspective.

Gender bias in sport is an area of research that marketers should further progress. This study has further shown that gender does have an influence on a sponsor's decision-making process. It has progressed research into the influence of gender on the sponsor's decision-making process by discovering that gender does in fact make a contribution to the selection process. The effect of these findings prompts sponsors to seek diversity and identify opportunities in both genders sporting achievements, rather than constantly seeking to sponsor one particular gender-dominant sport. Further, academics and practitioners will be able to further understand the factors to successful sponsorships and the influence of gender on these decisions within the New Zealand sports industry.

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Appendix A – In-depth Interview Questions

Context

1. Could you explain to me what you think are the factors to a successful sponsorship?

Receiver

2. What do you think makes a team or athlete appealing to sponsor?
3. How does the sponsor choose the most appropriate team or athlete to sponsor?
 - a. Could you please give me an example?
 - b. Do the teams approach the sponsors or do the sponsors approach the teams?

Sender

4. What methods and or techniques are used to monitor sponsorships (i.e. KPIs or specific targets etc.)?
 - a. Could you please give me some examples from your experience?
5. Could you describe the relationship between the sponsor and sponsee (i.e. requirements, and expectations etc.)?

Message / Content

6. How much of an influence does success have on a sponsor when selecting who to sponsor?
 - a. If not, what does have an influence on sponsors?
 - b. Do you think gender plays a part?
 - c. If yes, why do you think that is?

Human Ethics Committee – Student Application

Email: bzi@xtra.co.nz

Date

To Explore the Impact of Gender Perception on Sponsorship Decision Making. Information Sheet for Interviewee

My name is Bianca Iggo; I am a student completing my Masters of Commerce in Marketing at the University of Canterbury. This research is to study how different teams and athletes acquire sports sponsorships, what the underlying characteristics are for an ‘ideal’ sports sponsorship and what are the perceptual barriers for sponsorship selection. You are invited to participate in this research by completing a one-hour (approximately) interview.

If you choose to take part in this study, your involvement in this project will be answering questions and describing your experiences regarding sponsorship. The interview will not be recorded however, what is discussed will be transformed into de-identifiable transcripts for data analysis.

As a follow-up to this investigation, you will be asked to check the transcript from your interview.

Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. You may ask for your raw data to be returned to you or destroyed at any point. If you withdraw, I will remove information relating to you. However, once analysis of raw data starts in September, 2018, it will become increasingly difficult to remove the influence of your data on the results.

The results of the project will be included in my Masters thesis and may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: your identity will not be made public. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, recording will be transformed into de-identifiable transcripts for data analysis. Only aggregated data and coded data will be reported in any publication. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, no identifying data will be asked for or stored except for some basic demographics such as your age, gender and education level. Both myself and my supervisor will have access to the data. This will be stored securely within the university system and destroyed after a period of five years.

Please indicate to the researcher on the consent form if you would like to receive a copy of the summary of results of the project.

The project is being carried out as an academic research by Bianca Iggo, who can be contacted at [bzi@xtra.co.nz]. My supervisor (Dr Chris Chen) will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project (chris.chen@canterbury.ac.nz).

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you agree to participate in the study, you are asked to complete the consent form and return to the investigator before the interview.